

Arts LAB

CINEMA PROGRAMME

APRIL 1 - JUNE 30

60p

ITALIAN CINEMA

INGMAR BERGMAN

THE HOME FRONT

GAY CINEMA

THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR

TRUE CONFESSIONS



ABEL GANCE'S 5 HOUR FILM NAPOLEON (A)

THE premiere of *NAPOLEON* VU PAR ABEL GANCE was held at the Théâtre National de l'Opéra in Paris on 7 April 1927. Gance remembers it as 'unprecedented, unbelievable. The audience was on its feet at the end, cheering.' Among that audience was a young army officer, Charles de Gaulle; he never forgot the film.

Gance had intended to span Bonaparte's life in six separate productions. The problems of finance were so severe, however, that he was barely able to finish the first. Nevertheless, he lavished on the project both money and time. Sets and costumes were prepared, correct to the smallest detail. Locations were selected where the events had actually taken place. Impatient with the tableau quality of so many historical films, Gance strove for immediacy and dynamism. To him, a tripod was a set of crutches supporting a lame imagination. His aim was to free the camera, to hurl it into the middle of the action, to force the audience from mere spectators into active participants.

Technicians in the German studios were putting the camera on wheels. Gance put it on wings. He strapped it to the back of a horse, for rapid inserts in the chase across Corsica; he suspended it from overhead wires, like a miniature cable-car; he mounted it on a huge pendulum, to achieve the vertigo-inducing storm in the convention. But nothing caused more surprise than the Triptychs - the three screen process which anticipated Cinema by 30 years.

The process was named Polyvision, and Gance expected it to revolutionise the industry. But just six months after *NAPOLEON*'s premiere came *THE JAZZ SINGER* - and the talking picture revolution consigned the innovations of *NAPOLEON* to the scrapheap. The film disappeared. Gance made a shorter version in sound in 1934 (inventing stereophonic sound for the Marseillaise sequence). But the original silent version became as extinct as the original version of *GREED*.

I saw my first glimpses of *NAPOLEON* when I was still a schoolboy. The film had been released on 9.5mm in the late twenties, and had become a collector's item by the early fifties. I stumbled upon two reels by chance - and those two reels changed my life.

Even in fragmentary form, the film seemed so astonishing I determined to track down more of it. Film-makers and historians came to see my pasted-together version, and their praise made me feel I'd directed the picture myself.

I could not understand the disdain heaped on *NAPOLEON* by film historians like Paul Rotha until I saw a version on 35mm at the National Film Theatre. I was so appalled I walked out after a few reels. It was everything the critics accused it of being. Only when I saw a 17.5mm version in the collection of Dr C. K. Elliott did I realise what a travesty the previous version had been. In 1966, the NFI presented another version; much noisier, and tinted and toned. Yet, it still lacked essential scenes, and some reels made no sense at all.

The following year, Gance was given money by de Gaulle's Minister for the Arts to make a new version for the Bicentennial of Napoleon's birth. I saw my chance. Gance gave me access to all his negatives and fine grains, and Jacques Ledoux, of the Royal Belgian Film Archive, contacted every archive in the world which preserved even a single reel of *NAPOLEON*. In twelve weeks, I had produced the first nearly-complete version, which included many scenes blown up (by the National Film Archive) from Dr Elliott's 17.5mm print. New sections have been turning up ever since. I have no doubt that they will continue to do so, for this 'final' version is still a few reels short of the original.

The most tragic losses are the Triptych sequences which Gance says he destroyed in a fit of despair, when he realised the system would never be adopted. They were assembled when Gance realised the impact of the new form, and they showed three separate images. They covered Bonaparte's return to Corsica, the Double Tempest and the Bal des Victimes. They depended for their impact on pyrotechnic editing.

Gance had shown the world the power of his rapid cutting in *LA ROUE* (1919-1921), and the Russians had made it their national style. Now he applied it to the new medium of Polyvision. With just the final Triptych left, we can only imagine the impact of the lost sequences.

For its technical innovations alone, *NAPOLEON* ensures Abel Gance's place among the world's greatest film-makers. 'To make the public enthusiastic,' said Gance, 'you have to get the same feeling into your camerawork - poetry, exaltation ... but above all poetry. That is why Polyvision is so important to me. The theme, the story one is telling, is on the central screen. The story is prose, and the wings, the side screens, are poetry. That is what I call cinema. I must admit that from the first moment I say Polyvision, the normal cinema had no further interest for me. I was convinced that Polyvision would be the cinema's new language.'

'People are very slow to learn. Charles Villon, the painter, said that it's one's first seventy years which are the most difficult in France. Corbusier said the same; he said it takes fifty years to make friends and thirty years more for your friends to recognise your talent.'

Abel Gance is just 91.

Kevin Brownlow

KEVIN BROWNLOW

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra will provide the accompaniment for this performance of Carl Davis's score, originally created for the 1980 London Film Festival première. The conductor will be Alan Fearon.

The magnificently refurbished Birmingham Hippodrome will be a fitting venue for the unique event.

Tickets are on sale from February 25th at the Birmingham Hippodrome.

The film is in four parts: there will be two intervals of 20 minutes and one of approximately 60 minutes.

CENTRAL INDEPENDENT TELEVISION
in association with
THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

and
THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
present

ABEL GANCE'S 5 HOUR FILM



NAPOLEON (A)

ORCHESTRAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY
THE C.B.S.O.

Conductor:
ALAN FEARON

Score created by
CARL DAVIS

SUNDAY JUNE 6th at 2.30 p.m.

THE BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME
Hurst Street, Birmingham Telephone: (021) 622 7486
Tickets: £8, £10, £12

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Cover still: Monica Vitti in Michelangelo Antonioni's 'L'Eclisse'.

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CINEMA PRICES

£2.00 (public)
£1.50 (members and claimants)
£1.30 (life members)
85p (children under 14)
50p (OAPs)

There are reductions for students on all matinée and late night performances.

MEMBERSHIP

Owing to the exceptionally large number of Club performances in this programme, the Arts Lab will operate a system of temporary, 24-hour membership *for this period only*. The price for this will be 50 pence. Temporary members will pay the reduced admission price of £1.50 but will not receive the other benefits of full annual membership. Annual membership costs £7.50 and is open to all persons over the age of 18 years. The Arts Lab and the Centre for the Arts are now operating a joint membership system which means that subscribers will enjoy the benefits of membership (regular mailings and reduced admission prices, etc.) of both organisations. There is a special membership fee of £5.00 for students and claimants.

CINEMA FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Screenings of films at reduced prices for the unemployed will continue on a regular basis every Tuesday at 2.30 p.m. The admission price is 50 pence, on production of dole cards. Please see the calendar at the centre of this programme for details of titles, or ring Marion Doyen on 021-359 2403/4192.

THE COFFEE BAR

The Arts Lab Coffee Bar is open at lunchtimes and in the early evening, offering anything from a light snack to a full meal. The Coffee Bar also caters for parties and special bookings—contact Debbie Raikes on 021-359 4192.

CREDITS

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THE BOOKSTALL

The bookstall continues to expand its range of books on cinema and media studies and free 'new acquisition' lists are available on request. Opening hours are from 12 noon to 2.00 p.m., and from 5.30 p.m., until the start of the last cinema performance. We also run a mail-order service; please write to Neil Gammie for a full catalogue of our current holdings.

PRICE INCREASES

We regret that we have had to increase cinema admission prices for both public and members from April 1. The prices for O.A.P.s and children, however, still remain unchanged, and the discount to members will now be 50 pence instead of 30 pence. We hope to hold to these new prices throughout the new financial year.

PROGRAMME NOTES

For reasons of time and space we have been unable to provide the usual programme notes on all the films in this programme. A separate programme will be produced for the Buster Keaton season, and this will be mailed to members in due course. For late-night and matinée films, please see the calendar at the centre of the programme for a listing of titles and dates.



'Napoleon' (see opposite page).

ITALIAN CINEMA



THREE BROTHERS (Tre Fratelli)

(April 1—6)

Director: Francesco Rossi.
Italy/France, 1980.

Script: Francesco Rosi. Based on the short story
The Third Son by A. Platonov.

Photography: Pasqualino De Santis.

Music: Piero Piccioni.

Leading players: Philippe Noiret (Raffaele
Giuranna), Charles Vanel (Donato Giuranna),
Michele Placido (Nicola Giuranna), Vittorio
Mezzogiorno (Rocco Giuranna/Young Donato),
Andrea Ferreol (Raffaele's Wife).

Technicolor. English subtitles (Italian dialogue).
Certificate A. 111 minutes.

An eighty-year-old man travels from his Apulean farm to the local village to send telegrams to his three sons informing them of their mother's death. The first to arrive for the funeral is Rocco, a forty-year-old teacher in a Neapolitan correction centre for boys who is being pressured to expose the ringleaders of illegal activities in the city; Raffaele, the eldest brother, is a magistrate in Rome dealing with terrorist activities and increasingly estranged from his wife and subdued student son; Nicola, the youngest, is an assembly-line worker/rebel in Turin with a broken marriage and a young daughter, Marta, who arrives with him.....

At a time when most established Italian filmmakers are having trouble expressing themselves about terrorism but are all the same, understandably, unable to keep off the subject, it comes as no surprise that Rosi of all people should return from *Eboli* with a new and fascinating assess-

ment of its effects on contemporary Italian life. What is surprising, however, is the manner and the tools he employs to this end. Two hitherto un-Rosian elements are particularly striking: an extraordinarily mellow lyricism more often the preserve of Olmi-fied directors in Italy and abroad and, in the early days at least, total anathema to Rosi's brand of political realism; and secondly, the conception of two peculiarly conflicting dream worlds, from a Fellini-esque fantasy of the past to a Ferreri-like apocalyptic vision of the future. Add to this already formidable concoction Rosi's own statements on how *Three Brothers* is really a film about memory in the sense of a latter-day *Marienbad*, and one might well wonder what has happened to all the blood-and-guts stories of fiendishly concealed scandals of intrigue and corruption, from *La Sfida* to *Illustrious Corpses*.

Even more tangible proof of a radical departure from previous models is the violently bleached photography of Pasqualino De Santis' exteriors, contrasted with a strangely uneven rendering of the warmer but sparse and uncomfortable interiors. (which owe nothing to Platonov's short story *The Third Son* on which the film is loosely based). It might still be possible to make a case for a certain consistency, pointing out that, after all, the film is deeply rooted in a vision of Southern Italy which is really no different from Rosi's previous work. The denunciation of a political and economic status quo which condemns *Mezzogiorno* Italians to Northern Italy, and more familiar moments of dynamically constructed action (such as Raffaele's dream of his own death) are still very much present. But the real strengths of the film lie elsewhere. *Three Brothers* is essentially a film about structures, about patterns of relations, repetitions and difference, describing a constant *reculer pour mieux sauter* among representatives of different social classes and generations who

share (with so many Italians) common roots in the land. A teacher, a judge, a factory-worker; Naples, Rome, Turin; a bachelor, a 'normal' middle-class family, a 'typical' broken marriage; social work that is simultaneously for and against the State guided by a relatively a-political attitude, a defender of the values of the State within a recognisable centre-right ideology, a heavily politicised rebel for the left who will ultimately not condone terrorism. Parallel to the analysis of their place in the society as a whole is an exploration of more private concerns, of their relation to the village of their childhood: Rocco's indifference, Raffaele's serene and playful memories side by side with the bustle of the bar where he is at once judge and 'old friend', Nicola's sexuality and bitterness. Finally, their relation to the family crisis, to each other, and especially their father: Rocco's taciturn strength expressed in warm embraces and sustained, supportive looks; Raffaele's business-like efficiency in making the arrangements with as little grief as possible to the others; Nicola's tactful concealment of his own problems and an honest cheerfulness in alliance with Marta. It would appear that Rosi meant Rocco to stand out by endowing him with a prologue, an epilogue and a flashback to match that of the grandfather. This is perhaps the least convincing element, insofar as it suggests a form of regressive *reculer pour ne pas sauter* that runs counter to the tone and will of the film. Nobody, one would think, can afford the luxury of 'dreaming away' terrorism quite like that. But it is precisely this element which may be most appealing in Thatcherite Britain (more than in Spadolinian Italy), and will ensure the success of an otherwise rich and complex work.

Don Ranvaud

The above notes by Don Ranvaud are an edited version of his review of 'Three Brothers' for the 'Monthly Film Bulletin' (November 1981).

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI

"I think that all film-makers share a tendency to keep one eye looking inside themselves and the other onto the world. At a certain moment this form of 'double image' is reconciled and the two looks are superimposed. It is precisely in this 'agreement' between the eye and mind, the eye and instincts, the eye and consciousness, that the drive to speak and to make other people see, springs from."—Michelangelo Antonioni, in a 1964 interview with Jean-Luc Godard, published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No. 160.

"The greatest danger for film-makers rests in the extraordinary capacity of the cinema to lie."—Antonioni, in *L'Europa Letteraria*, 1964.

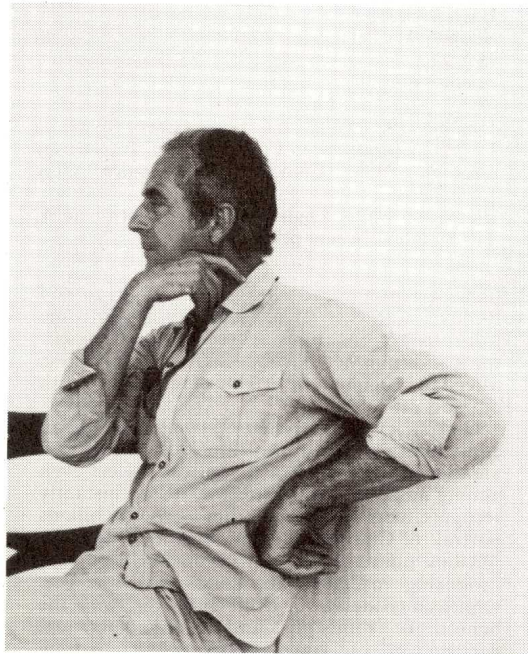
For regular patrons of the Arts Lab, Antonioni can perhaps best be described as the other side of Ingmar Bergman. In his notes for the first part of a season of work by the Swedish 'Grand Master', Philip Strick set up a running commentary on the films based on Bergman's own experiences and stressing the close, interweaving texture of thematic, stylistic and autobiographical elements.

By comparison, Antonioni's life does not appear, at least at first sight, to provide us with equally fertile cross-references. Born in Ferrara (Central Italy) on September 29, 1912, from solid middle-class stock, his early interests ranged from tennis and life drawing to the violin. While at the University of Bologna, reading Business Studies, he joined the film society, wrote reviews for the local paper and tried his hand at amateur theatre. It wasn't until 1939 that he began seriously to consider a career in the film industry. Having moved to Rome in that year, he collaborated with *Cinema* magazine and then attended the Italian film school for only two months in 1940. It was ten years later, at the age of 38, that he made his first feature, *Cronaca di un amore* (*Story of a Love Affair*).

The 'space in between' (except for his formal training in the cinema between 1939 and 1950, when he worked on a number of important scripts and shorts) is hardly worth commenting on: no father fixations, no hanky panky behind the bushes at the age of 16, not even an equivocal thought on account of the Latin teacher. I'm sure there is a dissertation somewhere on the relation between the ball-less tennis match in *Blow-Up* and Antonioni's early passion for the sport. As for the violin...the mind boggles!

As the opening quotation indicates, any autobiographical element in relation to Antonioni's films should be understood in terms of his investigation of 'autonomous' inner broodings rather than the detailing of the psychological consequences of childhood traumas. A film is seen by the director as an opportunity to verify and 'tune up' these observations with questions of relevance to the world at large. His explorations of human relationships are therefore not always directed inwards (as in Bergman) but outwards to show "the extent to which technology has outpaced life", and to denounce the fact that "the exigencies of mass communication have reduced personal contact to abstract misunderstandings where 'dialogue' is synonymous with estranged, stuttering monologues 'in sequence'." The sense of alienation and despair which pervades Bergman's finest statements about the 'human condition' are centred primarily on the disarray of the couple as a unit. Antonioni's characters, however, are *already* alone and seek salvation in an anonymous blending with the bleached, abstract landscapes that contain them.

Nowhere is this predicament more effectively portrayed than in *The Red Desert* (1964), a film which by virtue of its concern for colour and the representation of women can be seen as the crucial pivot to Antonioni's work as a whole (it is placed, significantly, at an equal distance from *Cronaca* and *The Oberwald Mystery*). Some of the notes on individual films in the season will attempt to argue the centrality of *Red Desert* and the need to see it, together with *Oberwald Mystery*, in 'isolation' from the 'flow' of Antonioni's work. To complete this introduction, a chronological diagram and accompanying notes will attempt to group the films



into coherent blocks.

FILMOGRAPHY/DIAGRAM

Shorts:

- G.1. 1943-47: GENTE DEL PO.
- G.1. 1948: N.U. (Nettezza Urbana).
- G.1. 1948-49: L'AMOROSA MENZOGNA.
- G.1. 1949: SUPERSTIZIONE.
- G.1. 1949: SETTE CANNE, UN VESTITO.
- G.1. 1950: LA FUNIVIA DEL FALORIA.
- G.1. 1950: LA VILLA DEI MOSTRI.

Features:

- G.2. 1950: CRONACA DI UN AMORE
- G.2. 1952: I VINTI
- G.2. 1953: LA SIGNORA SENZA CAMELIE
- G.1a. 1953: TENTATO SUICIDO (Episode of AMORE IN CITTA').
- G.2. 1955: LE AMICHE
- G.2. 1956-57: IL GRIDO

Theatre work with Monica Vitti, Virni Lisi and others. Staged *I AM A CAMERA* and *SCANDALI SEGRETI* and other plays. Failed to stage *TRA DONNE SOLE* by C. Pavese from which he made *LE AMICHE*. Theatre company dissolved after only a year.

- G.3. 1959: L'AVVENTURA.
- G.3. 1960: LA NOTTE.
- G.3. 1962: L'ECLISSE.
- G.4. 1964: DESERTO ROSSO.
- G.1b. 1965: PREFAZIONE (Episode of I TRE VOLT).
- G.5. 1966: BLOW-UP
- G.5. 1969-70: ZABRISKIE POINT.
- G.1c. 1972: CHUNG KUO (CHINA)
- G.5. 1975: PROFESSIONE REPORTER (THE PASSENGER).
- G.6. 1978-80: IL MISTERO DI OBERWALD (THE OBERWALD MYSTERY).

Note: 'G' signifies group (see introduction).

Group 1

Alongside the short films—and equally important—are a number of scripts and collaborations, most notably *Un Pilota ritorna* (director: Roberto Rossellini, 1942), *Les Visiteurs du soir* (director: Marcel Carné, 1942) *Lo Sciecco bianco* (director: Federico Fellini, 1952), *Caccia tragica* (director: Giuseppe De Santis, 1947), as

well as two (of many) unrealized projects with Luchino Visconti (*Furore* and *Il Processo di varia Tarkowska*).

Apart from the troubled relation with French director Marcel Carné (on whom Antonioni later wrote an important essay in *Cinema Nuovo*), this formative period allowed Antonioni to come into contact with all the main contributors to neo-realism and to establish himself as a much sought-after script writer. It is interesting to speculate about the turn that his career could have taken if he had been allowed to direct *Lo Sciecco bianco/The White Sheik* as originally intended, and also about the impact of his encounter with Visconti during the filming of *Ossessione*. Certainly Antonioni's short film *Gente del Po* (shot at the same time as *Ossessione* but not edited and shown until after the war) can be seen together with Visconti's film and Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946) as a cornerstone of neo-realism. But the proof of Antonioni's highly individual vision was provided immediately with his second short, *N.U. (Nettezza Urbana)*, 1948, which utilizes the neo-realist pretext of 'a day in the life of' garbage collectors to revitalize the dormant characteristics of the interface between early 'documentary' and 'abstract' cinema exemplified by Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin-Symphonie einer Grosstadt* (1927). The subject is clearly in tune with the general trends of Italian cinema of the time, but Antonioni's treatment (from dawn to dusk) relies heavily on the principles of avant-garde 'city symphonies' of the Twenties and displays a tendency towards a careful composition of plastic motifs (chiaroscuro, strong interplays of liquid and concrete 'blocks', etc.) that was largely untried by other contemporary directors. From the high achievement of these early shorts, Antonioni's work until 1950 can be seen as (fairly indifferent) experiments in cinematic narrative, ranging from the amusing venture into comic strip fantasy (*L'Amorosa Menzogna*, 1949) through the Olmi-like (*I am thinking of Il Tempo si è fermato/Time Stood Still*, 1959) cable car 'documentary' set in the Dolomites (*La funivia del Faloria*, 1950); to the analysis of the gigantic sculptures of the Villa Orsini of Bomarzo (*La Villa dei mostri*). (I have also included in this section some 'anomalous' productions which to some extent return to the experimental and documentary preoccupations of this early period.)

Group 2

This is the most heterogeneous collection of films in the series and their grouping should be seen more as a matter of convenience than of aesthetic or thematic unity. *Cronaca*, arguably, 'settles the score' with neo-realism once and for all and is useful in explaining the contradictions of the 'movement' as a whole. In it we find echoes of *Ossessione*, both in the romantic story of a crossed lover who is encouraged by the woman to murder her husband, and in the distinctive use of sequence-shots to convey the relentless haunting of the characters on the part of the camera/spectator. The middle-class milieu and the thriller elements, however, jar with previous 'realist' narratives and prefigure much of Visconti's as well as Antonioni's later work.

La Signora senza camelie is a powerful indictment of the cinema world. It traces the misfortunes of a starlet who goes from the casting couch to a marriage of convenience and ends up begging for work as an 'extra'. It's a harsh, cruel film that is memorable (as are so many of Antonioni's films) for one exquisitely elaborate sequence at the end of which the heroine is completely dehumanized among a mass of 'lost souls' traipsing around the horrific courtyards of Cinecittà.

Le Amiche and *Il Grido* foreground the tortuous existential drama that 'logically' ends with the suicide(s) of the protagonists. Both films are heavily 'scripted' and follow strong narrative patterns that are stretched out and rarefied in most of Antonioni's later films. Carlo di Carlo, a film-maker in his own right and an early chronicler of Antonioni's work, sees *Le Amiche* and *Il Grido* as the most successful accomplished works of the Italian cinema of the Fifties, stressing the importance of the excellent performances of Valentina Cortese, Gabriele Ferzette, Yvonne Furneaux and Madeleine Fischer in

the former film and Alida Valli and Steve Cochran in the latter.

Group 3

L'Avventura marks the international recognition of both Antonioni and his 'discovery', Monica Vitti, with the film winning prizes at Cannes and distribution contracts world-wide. Although the director has often argued for the need to see the next three films with Monica Vitti as a coherent block, most critics prefer to label *L'Avventura*, *La Notte* and *L'Eclisse* as a trilogy and to consider *Red Desert* as marking a substantial departure from the enclosed worlds of the preceding films. It's not just a question of colour (*Red Desert* is his first film in colour), though Antonioni's obsession with colour (see *The Oberwald Mystery*) is the single most important factor. It's also a question of thematic and structural coherence. The so-called trilogy features female protagonists (played by Lea Massari, Jeanne Moreau and Monica Vitti) who are in the grip of 'impossible' relationships that they want to escape from: in *L'Avventura* it's a 'desert island'; in *La Notte* it's the outskirts of the city where the woman's love affair began; and in *L'Eclisse* it's an improbable dream set in the African jungle. All three films are careful to preserve the traditional virtues of time and place. They also focus the attention of the spectator on the visible dissolution/breakdown of human relationships without offering concrete resolutions except in terms of a 'liberating' loneliness.

Group 4

In *Red Desert*, the Monica Vitti character is completely isolated from the central relationship as well as from her son and superficial friends. In attempting to reject her loneliness she finds comfort only in the bleak, painted scenery around the factory which 'responds' to her sense of loss and despair in a stunning celebration of pathetic fallacy.

Group 5

Antonioni's best-known films share a complete break with Italian realities, an obsession with advanced technology, and the distinguishing feature of one all-important sequence. In *Blow-up*, the 'reason for being' of the film is seen by Antonioni as the gradual disintegration of the 'evidence' of the murder into the grain-dots of the photographs (the 'blow-up' of the title). The closer one gets to the truth, in other words, the more abstract and indecipherable is the image of reality, a concept which echoes the concerns of *Nettezza Urbana* and *L'Avventura*.

In *Zabriskie Point* the use of slow motion sequences—for showing both love-making in the desert and the explosion of the symbols of our consumerist society—are examples of the artistic process of 'making strange', abstracting concrete, palpable images of freedom and oppression into aesthetic, plastic statements. It is in *The Passenger* that we find the culmination of all these experiments, in the stunning, Welles-like 7-minute sequence-shot commemorating/celebrating the Jack Nicholson character's death in the film (see separate notes on *The Passenger*).

Group 6

Given the above perspective, Antonioni's latest film can be seen as the crowning achievement of his career to date. In fact, despite the mostly hostile critical reaction it has so far received, *The Oberwald Mystery* seems likely to rank as one of the most innovative films of the '80s. It's a courageous work which remains rigorously coherent despite the contradictions involved in Antonioni's decision to further his experimentation with colour (combining video technology with film) while also returning to more traditional narrative forms. Another major source of interest in the new film is Antonioni's continuing obsession with exploring a myth (Monica Vitti) that he himself largely 'created'.

By way of conclusion, it is important to stress the many direct and indirect influences on Antonioni's stylistic and thematic preoccupations. In terms of painting, he may be likened to de Chirico (the empty streets and piazzas, the haunting symbols) and Piero della Francesca (the fixity of the image, even in long sequence-shots, and the sense of perspective). Acknowledged literary influences include Faulkner (*As I Lay Dying*), Hemingway, Eliot (*The Wasteland*), Pasternak and especially Camus, although any connection with 'the school of the look' (the nouveau roman writers such as Butor, Duras and especially Robbe-Grillet) is, Antonioni would claim, pure fiction. As far as the cinema itself is concerned, Bresson, Vigo, Welles, Renoir and even Resnais have all been cited as influences.

Don Ranvaud

THE LADY WITHOUT CAMELLIAS (La Signora senza camelia)

(April 20)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
Italy, 1952-53.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Francesco Maselli, P.M. Pasinetti.

Photography: Enzo Serafin.

Music: Giovanni Fusco.

Leading Players: Lucia Bosè (*Clara*), Andrea Cecchi (*Gianni*), Gino Cervi (*Ercole*), Ivan Desny (*Nardo*), Alain Cuny (*Lodì*), Monica Clay (*Simonetta*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate A.
115 minutes. 16 mm print.

Clara, a sensitive and intelligent shop-girl turned B-movie actress, tries in vain to break into the world of 'serious' films. The effort destroys her spirit and ruins her marriage and eventually she is forced to resign herself to a life of mediocrity both on- and off-screen.

On one level, clearly, *La Signora* is the Italian equivalent of Hollywood-in-Hollywood; on another, and in spite of its critical neglect even among admirers of the director, it's an instantly recognisable 'Antonioni film'. As a bilious portrait of Cinecittà the film illustrates the fairly obvious point that highly commercialised film producing machines are much the same (i.e. unpleasant) the world over. However, with the benefit of hindsight and changed critical perspectives on cinema (especially regarding questions of 'art' and 'commerce'), this aspect of *La Signora* comes over today as patronising, élitist, art-cinema attitudinising. As a precursor to Antonioni's better-known works, however, *La Signora*—his third feature as a director—is much more interesting and, like the earlier *Cronaca di un amore* and *I Vinti*, amply demonstrates that throughout his career Antonioni has, for better or worse, been extraordinarily consistent. Clara, in particular, is the archetypal Antonioni woman: sensitive, searching, independent-minded, yet also at the same time fatally passive, confused and alienated. Cut off from her own class yet unhappy in her newly acquired haut-bourgeois milieu, too intelligent and ambitious to want to remain a starlet yet unable to cope with the 'serious' roles she craves, her predicament is clearly echoed by the titles of two of her films, 'Woman Without a Destiny' and 'Slave of the Sphinx'. Ultimately Clara's career and personal life seem to be beyond her control: an actress-object in her films, she is also a woman-object in her personal relationships. Her search for rewarding film roles is, in effect, a reflection of a deeper search—for a fulfilling role in life, the key to her own identity, the meaning and purpose of her own existence—just as the grasping, grubby world of Cinecittà stands in as a metaphor for the wider, male-dominated, money-based society which it serves. Whether, on the basis of all this, Antonioni can successfully be recuperated for either feminism or Marxism, seems highly debatable, however. Clara's essential passivity, her puppet-like qualities, would seem to preclude her from the role of proto-feminist heroine, while Antonioni's representation of the evils of capitalist society leans more towards ascetic moralism than Marxist materialism.

Stylistically, the familiar symbolic use of desolate, barren surroundings is already very much in evidence. The bleak back lots of Cinecittà, the cold, geometrical modern architecture, grey, lowering skies, rain—all these reinforce the action's emotional register and forcefully underline Antonioni's themes of solitude, alienation and despair. As Jonathan Rosenbaum puts it: "figures and settings seem locked together (even if estranged and isolated) in the desolation of frozen space." Thus, even in this early work, the familiar Antonioni look is there in the way in which the director sets up various revealing and expressive spatial and rhythmic relationships between the characters and between the characters and their environments. Already Antonioni is revealing his ideas *visually* rather than falling back on dialogue or monologue, and displaying in embryo that style which was to become so famous in the early '60s.

Julian Petley

Supporting film:

TENTATO SUICIDIO

Antonioni's contribution to the episode film *L'Amore in Città*. Julian Petley has described *Tentato Suicidio* (*When Love Fails*) as "a series of interviews with people who have attempted suicide, some of whom re-enact their experiences. The *mise-en-scène* here is bleak and bare, and Antonioni's preoccupations (the place of women in society, alienation, isolation) are much in evidence."

(Director: Michelangelo Antonioni. Italy, 1953. 20 mins. 16 mm. print.)

THE GIRLFRIENDS (Le Amiche)

(May 5)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
Italy, 1955.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Alba De Cespedes. Based on the story *Tra Donne Sole* by Cesare Pavese.

Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo.

Music: Giovanni Fusco.

Leading Players: Eleonara Rossi Drago (*Clelia*), Yvonne Furneaux (*Momina*), Valentia Cortese (*Nenè*), Madeleine Fischer (*Rosetta*), Gabriele Ferzetti (*Lorenzo*), Franco Fabrizi (*Cesare*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate A.
104 minutes. 16 mm print.

Like *La Signora*, *Le Amiche* focuses on a socially displaced character, Clelia, a woman who has moved up the social ladder and out of her class. A working-class girl from Turin, she has risen in the world of fashion design and now finds herself rather unhappily among the haute bourgeoisie. Returning to Turin to open a new fashion house, she falls in with a group of wealthy, aimless young women and becomes caught up in their drifting social round.

Unusually for Antonioni *Le Amiche* is based, not on an original screen-play, but on a story by another author: 'Tra Donne Sole' ('Among Lonely Women') by Cesare Pavese. He is a writer with whom Antonioni has much in common: melancholia bordering on despair, an ambivalent fascination with women, an essentially moral vision. All these are as much Antonionian as Pavesian qualities, and ones which seem to have appealed equally strongly to both art-film audiences and early auteurs, with their notorious tendency to replace cinematic analysis with moral exegesis. Today, however, such qualities are likely to prove a good deal more controversial. Taking Antonioni on his own terms, though, nothing could be more accurate than an open letter to the director from Italo Calvino on the subject of *Le Amiche*, reprinted by Pierre Leprohon in his book on Antonioni. Describing him as "the bitter chronicler of a middle class generation", Calvino continues: "This is the first time that the cinema has shown the groups of men and women friends that are formed among the middle-middle classes of the cities; the atmosphere of evening and Sundays spent together in social activities, in automobile excursions; the flashes of violence and bitterness that brew beneath the surface of light chatter. Here is a fully formed world which has already built up its own literary tradition, but which the cinema had never yet succeeded in dealing with, because the cinema seemed better suited to presenting stories that were rich in contrast; individual *exploits*, rather than the subtle lights and shades of life in society. You have captured this world with the dryness that characterizes your style, founded on the interplay between sad, wintry landscapes and a dialogue that is neutral, almost casual: a cinematographic style that recalls the lessons in understatement provided by so many modern writers, Pavese himself among them. Your contribution in this film lies in having been able to look at this world with a sharp eye, unaffected by indulgence (without the nostalgic, crepuscular ornamentation of Fellini's *I Vitelloni*), bringing pitilessly into the light the elemental cruelty, the superficial sensuality, the permanent cowardice in the face of the most demanding moral crises."

In fact, Calvino's remarks are almost embarrassingly revealing, serving to emphasise that beneath the surface concern with social issues

such as class position, the role of women, urban alienation and so on there lurks a strong strain of Pascalian moralism, preoccupied less with the iniquities of late capitalism than with metaphysical notions such as Man's (*sic*) solitude and the hopelessness and futility of all attempts at escape from the human predicament.

More positively, however, *Le Amiche* illustrates very clearly Antonioni's increasing ability to make the images rather than the dialogue the main carriers of meaning. This is nowhere clearer than in the famous beach scene, quite the equal of the island search in *L'Avventura*. Detached from their normal urban surroundings, the characters drift around, bored and aimless, like the young men in *Vitelloni*. The use of bleak, windswept landscape is particularly striking here, and provides the action with its emotional resonance. It's a very elaborate, ambitious, densely choreographed piece of work which, as Pierre Leprohon puts it: "sums up and expresses the whole film with arresting poetry and bitterness."

Julian Petley

THE ANTONIONI TRILOGY

In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Richard Roud put forward the proposition that some of the 'difficult' films of the Sixties might not succeed with audiences now as they did then. 'In times of relative economic security', he said, 'audiences are willing to risk their money and time and are even prepared to work at seeing a film. Now all anybody wants is instant entertainment, something to take their minds off their troubles'.

How will the Antonioni trilogy—one of the major landmarks of post-war European cinema—look to modern audiences? The films are certainly complex; they deal with the anguish of affluence; and the trilogy's achievement is not the kind that is designed to take one's mind off one's troubles. *L'Avventura/The Adventure* (1959) concerns the disappearance of a girl and the guilty love relationship which develops between her best friend and her lover in their unavailing search for her. *La Notte/The Night* (1961) explores twenty-four hours of a decaying marriage between a successful novelist and his wife, a cancerous progress that they finally confront at dawn after an all-night party which has turned into a dark night of the soul. *L'Eclisse/The Eclipse* (1962) focuses on the slowly evolving romance between a girl and a callous stockbroker, her emotional tentativeness pointedly contrasted with his commercial energy.

At the time of the trilogy, Antonioni was the most fashionable and highly esteemed director in Europe. Admittedly the 1960 Cannes Festival had given *L'Avventura* the kind of reception that Paris had laid on for Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1913—derision and noisy audience disapproval pitted against the passionate advocacy of a smaller sector of spectators. But this only served to unite the critics in his favour and propose Antonioni as an innovative and beleaguered artist facing the slings and arrows of outrageous philistines. At a time when the European art movie was making considerable inroads into the cultural sensibilities of a class that had previously derided the cinema as a serious artistic medium, Antonioni became an important figure, an obviously rarefied talent who, like Henry James in the novel, catered for a more advanced and discriminating palate. He was that rare thing: an intellectual with a camera.

There is no doubt also that he caught a particular mood of the time. 'I think film-makers should always try to reflect the times in which we live', he said, 'not so much to express and interpret events in their most direct and tragic form but rather to capture their effect upon us'. For Antonioni, our own time is marked by a disjunction between material comfort and emotional emptiness. Most of his characters are wealthy, intelligent, outwardly successful, who nevertheless feel a gathering sense of dissatisfaction with their lives and who seek meaningful outlets and relationships. How do you find fulfilment? How best can you adapt to the society in which you live? More than any other film-maker, Antonioni made alienation fashionable. Also, more remarkably, he gave it a palpable visual form, the very positioning of the camera making each shot an eloquent comment on the tension between protagonist and environment.

It was conventional at the time to compare



Antonioni with the novelist Scott Fitzgerald, both men being acute analysts of the spiritual malaise of the rich and of heroes who are failed artists of one sort or another, and both men creating worlds of brittle surfaces that echo with the hollow sound of loveless money. Some iconoclastic critics took the comparison a step further and said that both artists shared a common and all-consuming self-pity. Hemingway's blunt rejoinder to Fitzgerald's lament that rich people are different from poor people is well known: 'Yes—they have more money'. Some were similarly dismissive of Antonioni's despair, regarding it as narcissism rather than concern and suggesting that, in depicting the lethargy of the leisured, he was merely echoing their bored self-regard. 'Antonionui' was Andrew Sarris's name for him.

This harsher view of Antonioni has some validity, but one would need to qualify it with a proper recognition of counterbalancing factors. The first is his capacity for irony and self-awareness, which is perhaps most evident in his characterisation of the photographer in *Blow-Up*, a hero who seems consciously to embody all the faults commonly attributed to Antonioni (coldness, lack of responsiveness to people, his view of individuals as photographic objects to be manipulated) and who is seen critically. The second is his sensitive attitude to women and their place in modern society. The brilliant and neglected *Le Amiche* (1955) might be the best example of this, but one could not talk of the trilogy without paying tribute to the extraordinary presence of Monica Vitti who is the lamp that gives the films their haunting humanity and emotional warmth.

There is finally Antonioni's attitude to form. Part of his progress towards the trilogy can be seen in terms of his shedding of neo-realist influences, and finding a way of expressing a reality in terms that are not completely realistic. He once said of *Bicycle Thieves* that, if he had made the film, he would have told you more about the man and less about the bicycle. Antonioni's trilogy attempts to free the cinema from the chains of narrative causation in favour of a form that takes its shape from mood more than event, from nuance, detail and digression more than from incident, exposition and dramatic climax. In many ways, still the central unresolved debate about Antonioni turns on the old question of the relation between form and content, whether he is a moralist or simply a 'shot-maker' and whether at key moments formal innovation becomes more important than dramatic expressiveness. Certain key Antonioni set-pieces—the picnic scene of *Le Amiche*, the island search of *L'Avventura*, the provocative endings of *L'Eclisse* and his later film, *The Passenger*—raise these questions in a very vivid and exciting way.

At the time the trilogy seemed boldly sexual, a study of modern erotic decadence that was less flamboyant than Fellini and more responsible. The impermanent and unstable relationships seemed symptomatic of a world, as Antonioni said, filled more with dead feelings than with live ones. The tense sexual jealousies of subsequent '60s films like *Knife in the Water* and *Les Biches* seemed to owe something to Antonioni's example, and there is even a trace of *L'Avventura* in a film like *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, which is also about

the inexplicable disappearance of a girl on a rock, also has an air of languid sensuality that seems to hang visibly in the air, and is also about a search that trails into suggestiveness and enigma. Mark Rothko is said to have remarked to Antonioni: "Your pictures are like my paintings—about nothing, with precision." As a reply, Antonioni might have paraphrased Archibald MacLeish's statement about poetry: that a film should not mean, but *be*. The shadow of the Antonioni trilogy still looms large, and a regular engagement—and re-engagement—with its questions and complexities is necessary for anyone remotely interested in the modern cinema.

Neil Sinyard

L'AVVENTURA (The Adventure)

(May 5)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
Italy/France, 1959-60.
Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Elio Bartolini, Tonino Guerra.
Photography: Aldo Scavarda.
Music: Giovanni Fusco.
Leading Players: Monica Vitti (*Claudia*), Gabriele Ferzetti (*Sandro*), Lea Massari (*Anna*), Dominique Blanchar (*Giulia*), Renzo Ricci (*Anna's Father*), James Addams (*Corrado*).
Black and white. English subtitles (Italian dialogue). Certificate X. 145 minutes.

LA NOTTE (The Night)

(May 9)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
France/Italy, 1960.
Scrip: Michelangelo Antonioni, Ennio Flaiano, Tonino Guerra.
Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo.
Music: Giorgio Gaslini.
Leading Players: Jeanne Moreau (*Lidia*), Marcello Mastroianni (*Giovanni*), Monica Vitti (*Valentina*), Bernhard Wicki (*Tommaso*), Maria Pia Luzi (*Patient*), Rosy Mazzacurati (*Resy*).
Black and white. English subtitles (Italian dialogue). Certificate X. 121 minutes.

L'ECLISSE (The Eclipse)

(May 16)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
Italy, 1962.
Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra, Elio Bartolini, Ottiero Ottieri.
Photography: Gianni Di Venanzo.
Music: Giovanni Fusco.
Leading Players: Monica Vitti (*Vittoria*), Alain Delon (*Piero*), Francisco Rabal (*Riccardo*), Lilla Brignone (*Vittoria's Mother*), Rossana Rory (*Anita*), Mirella Ricciardi (*Marta*).
Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate X. 124 minutes (cut from 125).



THE RED DESERT (Deserto Rosso)

(May 30)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.

Italy/France, 1964.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra.

Photography: Carlo Di Palma.

Music: Giovanni Fusco.

Leading Players: Monica Vitti (*Giuliana*), Richard Harris (*Corrado Zeller*), Carlo Chionetti (*Ugo*), Xenia Valderi (*Linda*), Rita Renoir (*Emilia*), Aldo Grotti (*Max*).

Eastman Colour. English subtitles (Italian dialogue). Certificate X. 116 minutes.

Robin Wood's essay on *Red Desert* in the *Movie* paperback devoted to Antonioni's work (Studio Vista, 1970) remains one of the most engaging and perceptive analyses of the film to date. Wood's strong feel for Antonioni's use of colour allows him to observe parallels with Hitchcock that at first sight may appear ludicrous or irrelevant but that are most cogently argued for through films like *Marnie* and a cluster of literary references 'around' Keats. Paradoxically, however, he is prepared to let what he sees as the thematic unity between this film and the three preceding ones (*L'Avventura*, *La Notte* and *L'Eclisse*) take precedence over the aesthetic 'revolution' of the use of colour. After *The Oberwald Mystery*, I think that such a critical strategy would be difficult to defend at any level, although the historical value of such a position is still considerable in view of the critical opposition to Antonioni in the past and the short-sightedness of most critics towards any aspect of the new cinematic language discovered by the director in this film.

The chief stumbling block in the way of an attempt to establish a link between *Red Desert* and the trilogy is that here the central female protagonist, Giuliana, has already attempted suicide and is completely isolated from the beginning of the film. The industrial desert which reflects her state of mind has contaminated all the timid remnants of a 'natural' environment: trees are painted grey, the sea is populated by oil rigs, and all that is left is a blue line and the rich, fluid texture of Giuliana's fantastic fairy-tales of lost paradise islands, which she tells to an already detached and 'alienated' son who is bent on teasing rather than supporting her. More than a vision of hell, however, it is a feeling of numbness in a perpetual limbo which is transmitted by Antonioni's 'work' on the images.

In the trilogy, there was at least a sense of struggle and a desire to find comfort in some kind of inner peace. The reading of the love-letter at the end of *La Notte*, for example, is used by the couple as a last-ditch attempt to rekindle feeling for each other and is thus evidence of some warmth/passion in the not-too-distant past. Although the man doesn't recognize the letter as his own, he does recognize it as an expression of

love, even though he cannot express these feelings in the present. In *Red Desert*, however, there is no possibility of such recognition. Indeed, the mutual attraction (and the 'production' of a son) appears to be purely negative and self-destructive, just as the environment is overrun with pollution and bleakness. Giuliana is 'on the verge' of insanity, but what is truly tragic is precisely her sustained existence in this half-light and the impossibility of finding comfort/resolution even in loneliness. Her lament is articulated in a series of unanswered questions: "How can I escape?" "Should I have an affair with one of his friends who is about to leave for Patagonia?" "Shall I throw myself into the sea by driving over the edge?" "Should I leave on a boat bound for...anywhere?" And, most crucially, "There is something terrible in my life and I don't know what it is—why won't anyone tell me?...but is there anywhere a place where things could be different?" Jean-Louis Comolli succeeds in finding some kind of hope in the débris of Giuliana's mind and the dead coral on the beach: "The film encourages us to deduce that if we are completely surrounded by the desert as far as the eye can see, the oasis must be within ourselves."

Don Ranvaud

BLOW UP

(June 9)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.

Great Britain, 1966-67.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra

(English dialogue associated: Edward Bond).

Inspired by a short story by Julio Cortazar.

Photography: Carlo Di Palma.

Music: Herbert Hancock.

Leading Players: David Hemmings (*Thomas*),

Vanessa Redgrave (*Jane*), Sarah Miles (*Patricia*),

Peter Bowles (*Ron*), Verushka (*Verushka*).

Metrocolor. Certificate X. 111 minutes.

Blow Up marked a series of changes for Antonioni—of country, of language and, after four films with the emblematic Monica Vitti, of star. There are changes of style and structure too: no longer is the narrative built around the frustrations of a central female figure; the tempo is brisker and the means of expression more direct and immediate, less mannered and self-conscious. However, from a distance, and now that the dust has settled over this once-notorious work, one can clearly recognise that, beneath the surface changes, *Blow Up* is as much an 'Antonioni film' as *La Notte*, *L'Avventura* and *L'Eclisse*. As Charles Samuels points out:

"The events in *Blow Up* dramatize the same theme one finds in Antonioni's other films. The photographer, a creature of work and pleasure but of no inner force or loyalty, is unable to involve himself in life. He watches it, manipulates it; but, like all of Antonioni's male characters, he has no sense of life's purpose. Thus, when faced with a challenge, he cannot decisively act. Unable to transcend himself, except through ultimate

confrontation with his soul, he represents modern paralysis...."

"The modern world [...] seems bent on destroying its traditions. On the wall of the photographer's apartment, an old Roman tablet is overwhelmed by the hallucinatory violence of the modern painting at its side. More important, traditional human pursuits are being drained of their force. Politics is now play-acting; a pacifist parade marches by with signs bearing inscriptions like 'No' or 'On. On. On. On.' or 'Go away'. Pleasure is narcotizing, whether at the 'pot' party or in the rock 'n' roll club. Love is unabsorbing, as the photographer learns from his friend's marriage. Art has lost its vitality. Murder is ignored...." (Hard to believe now that Antonioni was widely accused of arty-commercial sensationalism, of revelling in what he pretended to condemn, and that Andrew Sarris could hail *Blow Up* as "a mod masterpiece...half mod, half Marxist." *Time* magazine was far nearer the Antonioni mark when it described the film's central character as the kind of "fungus that can grow freely in a rotting society.")

In the ever bleaker world that Antonioni paints, uncertainty, insecurity and alienation have now reached such a pitch of intensity that the Antonioni protagonist has come to doubt even the validity of his own perceptions—indeed, this is the central theme of the film, as Robin Wood correctly identifies: "the main drift of *Blow Up* seems to me very clear: we are shown a young man inhabiting a world in which everything combines to undermine the firmness of his hold on reality." Unfortunately, for all the excellence of the blow-up sequences, the film doesn't really stand up as the self-reflexive essay in photographic ontology that some critics would like it to be; and for all its surface similarities, it certainly isn't a re-working of Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.

However, this isn't to say that today *Blow Up* is devoid of interest, or is of interest only to Antonionian auteurs. In many ways it's an extraordinarily beautiful film, many of whose scenes transcend their author's moralistic tones. I would agree with Andrew Sarris on the film when he writes: "As David Hemmings moves gracefully through off-beat sites in London, his body writing to meet the challenge of every new subject, we feel that Antonioni himself is intoxicated by the sensuous surfaces of a world he wishes to satirize. Curiously, he is more satisfying when he succumbs to the sensuousness than when he stands outside it. The unsuccessful sequences—the rock 'n' roll session, the marijuana party, the alienation conversations between Hemmings and Vanessa Redgrave in one scene and Sarah Miles in another—all suffer from the remoteness of cold chronicles recorded by an outsider. Antonioni is more successful when he forgets his ennui."

Julian Petley

ZABRISKIE POINT

(June 9)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.

U.S.A., 1969.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Fred Gardner, Sam Shepard, Tonio Guerra, Clare Peplow.

Photography: Alfio Contini.

Music: Pink Floyd, Kaleidoscope, The Rolling Stones, The Youngbloods, The Grateful Dead, John Fahey, Roscoe Holcomb, Patti Page.

Leading Players: Mark Frechette (*Mark*), Daria Halprin (*Daria*), Rod Taylor (*Lee Allen*), Paul Fix (*Café Owner*).

Metrocolor/Scope. Certificate X. 110 minutes.

After the commercial success of *Blow Up* in the wake of the "Swinging London" myth, Antonioni was approached by MGM to make another film on a currently fashionable subject, that of student protest. As might be expected, however, *Zabriskie Point* can hardly be considered a politically radical work. As Antonioni himself announced during shooting: "This film is about what two young people feel. It is an interior film. Of course, a character always has a background...." He later said: "I am not a sociologist. My film does not constitute an essay on the U.S.; it goes beyond the particular and specific problems of that country. Essentially, the film has a poetic and an ethical value."

Zabriskie Point follows the intersecting courses of the lives of two rootless, drifting young people, Mark and Daria. Neither fits into the world they

inhabit: Mark wants to be a radical without belonging to any radical organisation, whilst the free-wheeling Daria works as a Secretary for an anonymous corporation with which she has nothing in common. Both are simply concerned with "doing their own thing", "dropping out", and not with organised political action. For them, the demanding world of radical student politics is as oppressive and unattractive as the grasping materialism of "straight" society. Their flight into Death Valley is entirely appropriate. As Andrew Tudor puts it in his article "The Road to Death Valley" (*Cinema*, Nos. 6/7):

"It is almost as if the further they can get from the human, material and social world the more able they are to relate to each other. Only in this totally untouched prehistoric valley can an Antonioni couple finally reach each other. Albeit clumsily, the peopling of the valley with love-making couples, trios, and quartets serves to reinforce the importance and intensity of this experience. We are invited to contrast the frustrations of the human world with the consummation of this primaeva desert. Except for here in Death Valley the earth is soiled beyond help."

It is into this unsullied world, however, that the company for which Daria works wants to expand. Indeed, her boss's ultra modern house, perched on a rocky outcrop on the edge of the desert, expresses this Nature/Civilisation opposition perfectly, and its heavily symbolic quality is further underscored by the film's apocalyptic ending, as Daria imagines the whole thing wiped off the face of the earth. To quote Tudor again:

"A refrigerator full of pre-packed goods explodes before our eyes; a TV announcer is cut off in mid-flow; a case of books dance an aerial ballet. Daria, smiling for the first time since Mark left, turns away. Only the sun is left setting over the desert. This is clearly the most apocalyptic of Antonioni's endings, offering some of the emotional intensity involved in the final scene of *If...* Daria, the passive and tolerant, dreams of the millennial cleansing of the earth. Nothing, says *Zabriskie Point*, except destruction, can save us now. The revolutionaries are too much like those against whom they are rebelling. Only this can allow us our expression, our individual freedom. The desperate intellectualism of the earlier films has become the romantic anarchism of the young. This film is not simply a denial of America; it is a denial of society."

"The villain is not industrial society, but the idea of society itself. The contrast is between the group and the individual. Alienation, meaning the constraining of the individual by forces outside of himself, is part and parcel of man in society. To be social is to be constrained. Of course, in conceiving the malaise as he did, this view was always on the cards. *Zabriskie Point*, in this sense, is a logical outcome of the other films. Mark rejects the 'reality trip' of the revolutionary students for exactly this reason. To operate with other people involves constraints on his individual desires, his creativity. It is only by wiping out 'civilisation' that Daria can regain her wholeness. *Zabriskie Point* is a deeply anti-social film. It is only in a world emptied of man and his creations, in Death Valley, that Antonioni comes face to face with the real nature of his problem. It is a long road to travel to reach such a conclusion."

Julian Petley

THE PASSENGER (Professione: Reporter)

(May 16-18)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.
Italy/France/Spain, 1975.

Script: Mark Peploe, Peter Wollen, Michelangelo Antonioni.

Photography: Luciano Tovoli.

Leading Players: Jack Nicholson (*David Locke*), Maria Schneider (*Girl*), Jenny Runacre (*Rachel Locke*), Ian Hendry (*Martin Knight*), Stephen Berkoff (*Stephen*), Ambrose Bia (*Achebe*).

Mefrocolor. English dialogue. Certificate A. 119 minutes.

"We all know that behind the image perceived there is always another which is clear, more faithful to reality, and behind that one there is another and another one still...until we reach an absolute, mysterious reality which no-one will ever be able to see...Unless, that is, absolute reality is the de-



composition of all images, of all sense of 'reality'."—Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964.

If we accept the tabulation offered in the Introduction and hold to the coherence of the trilogy (*L'Avventura*, *La Notte*, *L'Eclisse*) around thematic and structural concerns, then it might be said that Antonioni's three English-language films offer a 'trilogy' in terms of using the cinema as structuring principle. The importance of single sequences has already been indicated: their strength lies in their metaphoric value, from which the film's 'message' is drawn, but also in the fact that they reveal something quite profound about the nature of our experience(s) of the cinema as a whole. In *Blow Up*, the 'dissolution' of the *corpus delicti* into the grain of the film is at once a narrative device (the film is the story of an investigation and only later of a crime; the central character is a photographer, hence the title, etc.) and a statement about the cinematic illusion (each frame is essentially an organized 'bunch of dots'). In *Zabriskie Point*, the slow motion effect is an essential part of the narrative, focusing on the opposition love-making in/with nature versus the annihilation of modern technology. But it is also a way of drawing attention to the illusion of duration in the cinema (the camera can and does lie, it can transform not only the objects and the space placed in front of it, but also the very notion of time). In *The Passenger*, the famous 7-minute sequence-shot quite simply is the film. For this sequence Antonioni mobilized a whole new crew of technicians from the States and spent as much as the entire budget for an 'average' B feature (150-180,000 dollars). The camera was specially built to his instructions and is operated by a computer which ensures a smooth, virtually imperceptible movement from an enclosed (and particularly dark) space through the bars of a window to a brilliantly lit courtyard, and around the house close to the entrance hall. At this point in the film we are uncertain as to whether the Jack Nicholson character is dead or not; if he is, it's not clear whether he has been murdered or has committed suicide and where, as it were, we may go from there. The breathtaking circular movement we are compelled to watch reproduces and synthesises the narrative structure of the entire film (seemingly aimless searching/running away; changes of identity, camouflages, mystery, etc.). It also points to the illusions already foregrounded in the previous two examples, except that here the camera as a trickster is supreme in that it transforms time and space without any "external" interference at all. Had Antonioni only made this one film (and this one sequence), he would already deserve a place in the history of the cinema.

Don Ranvaud



THE OBERWALD MYSTERY (II Mistero Di Oberwald)

(June 6-8)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni.

Italy/West Germany, 1980.

Script: Michelangelo Antonioni, Tonino Guerra.
Based on the play *L'Aigle à deux têtes* by Jean Cocteau.

Photography: Luciano Tovoli.

Music: Excerpts from the works of Richard Strauss, Arnold Schönberg, Johannes Brahms.

Leading Players: Monica Vitti (*The Queen*), Franco Branciaroli (*Sebastian*), Luigi Diberti (*Felix, Duke of Willenstein*), Elisabetta Pozzi (*Edith de Berg*), Amad Saha Alan (*Tony*), Paolo Bonacelli (*Count Fohn*).

Colour. English subtitles (Italian dialogue).
Certificate A. 129 minutes.

Antonioni's rewording of Jean Cocteau's play *'L'Aigle à Deux Têtes'* is set in a Middle European state at the turn of the century. *The Queen*, whose husband (*Frederick*) was assassinated on their wedding day ten years earlier, lives in almost total seclusion in her various castles. While in Oberwald Castle, she is intruded upon by a young anarchist poet, *Sebastian*. Despite their antagonisms, they fall in love with one another. But political pressures begin to mount up against them ...

At 68, exactly 30 years after his first feature film (*Cronaca di un Amore*), Antonioni seems to have rocked the boat of critical platitudes and outraged and disappointed everyone, even himself. The extraordinary reception which has 'greeted' the release of his latest film in this country is so reminiscent of similar outcries in the past that, according to form, *The Oberwald Mystery* could be transformed into another landmark—a misunderstood masterpiece perhaps to be rescued by the upcoming video-generation. For it is to them that Antonioni has had the courage to address himself in an uncompromising and original manner, and it is because of them that he appeared, at the Venice Film Festival, to wink at the older generations of critics, apologising for the quality of the print, the Romantic nature of the project, and the "banality of the colour experiments". Withdrawing from the established features of his reputation—the auteur who has best chronicled man's inability to adjust to the technological world, a line that runs in Italian culture from Fogazzaro perversely through the Futurists to Olmi and Pasolini—and withdrawing also from the bewildering reality of contemporary Italy (Rosi, Petri and, unexpectedly, Bertolucci's *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*), Antonioni has reconstructed himself in a film that celebrates the technological world and rediscovers the power of narrative by sealing off its characters in a symphony of colour.

It follows that after three years of playing space



invaders with the most advanced technological equipment available, he should feel compelled to express the same embarrassment and sense of alienated failure as his previous characters in a world overrun by machines. It follows also that the centrality of human beings in a nineteenth-century realist mould—so displaced in his previous work—should return with a vengeance in a period piece which 'balances' at the turn of the century rather than in the flamboyant era of Ludwig II of Bavaria (as intended by Cocteau in his original play, *The Eagle Has Two Heads*) or in the uglier contemporary world. Nevertheless, affinities with Cocteau are revealed precisely in the *raison d'être* of the project: the experiment with video colour transposed onto film. The urgency of the trick effects, the elaborate formal, visual and narrative 'screens', the cobweb of filters scanning the image are reminiscent of the formidable array of other, more expressionistic devices used by Cocteau to conceal the vestiges of surrealist strategies and displaced ghosts lurking at the touch-lines of the narrative. Moreover, closer inspection reveals a degree of auteurist consistency which seems to have been deliberately repressed in the haste of a unanimous critical dismissal. The obsession with colour and the meticulous playfulness of Antonioni's *mise-en-scène* are not limited to the hand-painting of leaves (*Red Desert*) or the spectacular use of slow motion (*Zabriskie Point*). They also include the street scenes shot, paradoxically, in black-and-white for his early shorts—in particular *N. U. (Nettezza Urbana)*—rubbish collecting—and the memorable sequence in *Red Desert* where Corrado's attention is caught, while instructing some workmen, by a blue line on a wall which, on closer camera scrutiny, dissolves into a mesh of abstractions and a murmur of 'psychological' suggestions. This is reproduced here in the vivid contrast between a sumptuous interior filled with warm and 'realistic' colours (contaminated by the blue radiations of the Chief of Police) and the dazzling orange skies and yellow stretches of grass 'liberated' by the presence of the lovers, and the matter-of-fact slaughter of the goats. The relation between the inner sanctuary and the external forces from which it is constantly under threat (in other films, the pressures of a modern world incomprehensible or unacceptable to the characters) is juxtaposed with the burning desire to absorb, love and/or die in the arms of the intruder, to surrender to a game of Russian roulette with the 'other'.

For all its melodramatic ingredients, *The Oberwald Mystery* refuses melodrama through its technological means and, as in other films, keeps us at a healthy distance. This is its great victory. Long ago, after the trilogy, Antonioni explained: "I have been criticised for observing everything from a distance; this is not at all deliberate, only my method of telling the story. This 'distancing' is perhaps also modesty. I manage to imagine a moving scene but I cannot direct it. Perhaps this is because I am moved before others...." Ultimately though, this film is important because it represents the future of the cinema inevitably heading for a frightful but also, in Antonioni's hands, marvellous collision with video-technology. Eric Rhode's words on *L'Eclisse* seem peculiarly relevant here: "Antonioni explores areas of the present out of which the future is emerging and we need that future to find a language adequate for his exploration".

Don Ranvaud

The above notes by Don Ranvaud are an edited version of his review of the film for the 'Monthly Film Bulletin' (September 1981).

TWO BERTOLUCCIS

THE GRIM REAPER (La commare secca)

(June 2)

Director: Bernardo Bertolucci.

Italy, 1962.

Script: Bernardo Bertolucci, Sergio Citti, Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Photography: Gianni Narzisi.

Music: Carlo Rustichelli, Piero Piccioni.

Leading Players: Francesco Ruiu (*Luciano Maialelli*), "Canticchia", Giancarlo de Rosa (*Nino*), Vincenzo Ciccora (*Mayor*), Alvaro d'Ercole (*Francolicchio*), Romano Labate (*Pipito*), Lorenza Benedetti (*Milly*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 91 minutes (cut from 100).

Bernardo Bertolucci's stunning début as a director was the product of chance. Having been an assistant to Pier Paolo Pasolini on *Accattone*, he was recommended (with Sergio Citti) for this project only because Pasolini was already otherwise engaged on his second feature (*Mamma Roma*) from one of his original stories. The producer (Tonino Cervi) had already been in contact with another director (Leopoldo Savona) but was persuaded to risk everything on this 20-year-old novice largely because of 'guarantees' that Pasolini would continue to 'collaborate' on the project as best he could.

The film is based on the investigation of a prostitute's murder. There are six suspects: Canticchia, a small-time thief who 'specialises' in stealing handbags from amorous couples in the pine forest near the EUR district of Rome (where, incidentally, Pasolini was murdered); Il Califfo, a pimp who is about to abandon his woman; Teodoro, a soldier; Cosentino, a southern 'peasant' who is out of his depth in the big city; Francolicchio and Pipito, two adolescents who are caught making love with their girlfriends. Each character is cross-examined and appears to have a solid alibi, but at the end one of them is convicted.

The plot is really an excuse. What Bertolucci is essentially interested in is an exploration of each character's relation to Rome and their lives in general. As a first feature, *The Grim Reaper* is exceptional in every sense, and much of the critical antagonism it received at the premiere in Venice in 1962 was due precisely to the virtuosity it displayed in the texture of the narrative as well as the now familiar agility of Bertolucci's camera. Although clearly in debt to Pasolini, the film differs from *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* on three important counts. (1) Bertolucci's cinematic culture is grounded in the American cinema, and here the debt to *film noir* codes produces an interesting combination with characters, situations and settings determined by Pasolini's own interests. (2) The total rejection of 'the master's' frontality—here the camera is moving constantly, not looking characters in the face but embracing them, moving around and among them and their environment. (3) What Bertolucci would define as a sensual rather than a religious relationship with the subject.

These stylistic features emphasise the fact that Bertolucci is deliberately forging a personal, formal strategy in response to his experience with Pasolini. The narrative moves smoothly from first person narration to flashbacks and 'other variations' so as to construct an overall sense of subjectiveness that relies on the inability to choose one variation over another. But if the murder is a McGuffin and the formal structure is the primary area of concern which allows the director to find his own identity as a film-maker, the content is also a transformation/appropriation of Pasolinian choices. Bertolucci changes the victim (from a homosexual to a prostitute) and the murderer (to some extent he plays actively on the fact that all suspects are interchangeable). Moreover, the inner story of the two adolescents (one of whom, incidentally, gives Bertolucci's date of birth as his own) is rendered more dramatic in the film by their attempt to escape via the river. The soldier also plays a significantly more important role in the film than in the original story, and a number of *Accattone*-like sub-proletarian bystanders disappear altogether.

Don Ranvaud





THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (La Tragedia di un Uomo Ridicolo)

(June 3-8)

Director: Bernardo Bertolucci.

Italy, 1981.

Script: Bernardo Bertolucci.

Photography: Carlo Di Palma.

Music: Ennio Morricone.

Leading Players: Ugo Tognazzi (*Primo Spaggiari*), Anouk Aimée (*Barbara Spaggiari*), Laura Morante (*Laura*), Victor Cavallo (*Adelfo*), Olympia Carlisi (*Chirromant*), Riccardo Tognazzi (*Giovanni Spaggiari*).

Technicolour. English Subtitles. Certificate AA. 116 minutes.

Bertolucci upset a lot of people with this film. That's nothing new: a non-controversial film from the director of *The Conformist*, *Last Tango in Paris* and *La Luna* would be rather hard to image. In the past Bertolucci was able to manipulate outrage and moral condemnation to his advantage, but here his seemingly ambivalent attitude towards terrorism has generated such a unified chorus of violent critical disapproval and public disdain that he has found himself with an almighty flop on his hands. This wish to file away *Tragedy* as quickly as possible and exorcise Bertolucci 'once and for all' is reminiscent of the treatment accorded to the most influential of his (many) father figures: Pasolini. It seems to me, however, a clumsy way of avoiding the subject of terrorism by practising a form of moral and cultural terrorism on an essentially accurate if uncomfortable portrayal of contemporary Italy.

The story of *Tragedy* is, on the surface, quite simple. Giovanni, the son of a wealthy cheese factory owner (Primo), is kidnapped, feared dead, but is later 'mysteriously' released after the payment of a substantial ransom. The problem lies in Primo's attempts to speculate on the tragic events by striking a deal which would enable him to transfer the ransom money into the family's factory coffers without the knowledge of the taxman.

The elaborate plan of action is described by Primo in a voice-over commentary, following the reports of Giovanni's death. The fraud has already been masterfully prefigured in an earlier sequence at the bank, which is shot from oblique camera angles that 'straighten' themselves out as Primo realises that there is something to be gained from the scheme after all. Similarly, the stunning visual portrayal of the circles within circles motif

in the shot of a car-park ramp anticipates the squares within squares construction of the pigsty where once the details of the operation are finalised. This last sequence describes, by way of metaphor (the souring of the milk into cheese), the intimate connection between Primo's family and the factory. Liquids turn to solids, the factory is the same age as Giovanni, and both have the same value in Primo's heart. It is at this point, while he is still staring at the milk-baths, that Primo can cleanse his conscience ("I will use the blood of my son to fertilise my business") and, in a sense, fulfil Giovanni's radical aspirations by stealing money from the banks.

The plan backfires. Giovanni *is* alive and nobody knows for sure where the money has gone. There is a strong possibility that the cash has reached terrorists groups with the complicity of Giovanni, the workers who act as intermediaries (Laura and Adelfo), and possibly (though improbably) the help of the mother (Barbara). What is worse is that the light-hearted ending of the film seems to suggest that, when all is said and done, taking money from the banks and the likes of Primo may not be altogether a bad thing. After all, it does teach him a thing or two about human relationships—and, anyway, who would want to support the system of corrupt and deceitful individuals that symbolise the inhuman face of capitalism?

It is important to see the solution, at least partly, in terms of the film's coherence with Bertolucci's overall project as a film-maker. With regard to the structure of the film, we are given, for the first time in the director's work, the father/son problematic at the centre of the film. In Bertolucci's previous films, this concern was displaced—onto the comrade/teacher Cesare in *Before the Revolution*, the search for the grandfather in *The Spider's Strategem*, the killing of the substitute father/professor Quadri in *The Conformist*, and the complex network of relationships around the mother in *La Luna*.

Tragedy is also consistent with Bertolucci's previous work in terms of its visual style, despite the fact that he is working here with Carlo Di Palma and not his regular cinematographer, Vittorio Storaro. Under Bertolucci's direction, Di Palma's cinematography is every bit as precise and exhilarating as Storaro's. The images of *Tragedy* have a restlessness and immediacy which move constantly towards a remarkable compositional unity and the detailed construction of a familiar topography. The results confirm a distinctive cinematic vision which Bertolucci and his collaborators seem to be able to produce 'effortlessly'.

Above all, however, the film's most striking feature is an elaboration of the extraordinary motifs brought together in the concluding scene of *La Luna*, where each character becomes another's

'spectacle'. It is precisely within this rigid scheme of looks and glances that *Tragedy* makes its disquieting (and fundamentally *honest*) assessment of terrorism in contemporary Italian life. The film is narrated in the first person by Primo (which also means 'first'); there are five direct references to the 'ridiculous' of the title, the first three being particularly significant in that they are literally moments of (mirror) reflection. In the first, Primo in his new hat is talking to his image in the mirror, and admitting that he has been aware of being ridiculous since he was five years old, but that at least he "has style". In the second, he looks at the mirror by the kitchen door, having talked to Adelfo and having humiliated himself and the maid in the kitchen by interfering with a rock and roll 'class', and is confronted by an image that has no style at all—he is merely "useless and ridiculous". This gradual loss of self-respect reaches its nadir in the conversation with Laura and Adelfo while the money-lenders are busy bargaining downstairs; Primo feels excluded, Adelfo's biblical riddles escape him completely, and he cannot find a way to tell Barbara that all appears to be lost—he is ridiculous and pathetic. The other two references are directed first at the camera (Primo is reconstructing some self-respect after the 'deal' with the money-lender Baron, and is cycling round town with a billion lire in cash in plastic bags) and then at Barbara (at the numerologist's where they agree "we are either crazy or ridiculous") and mark the unspoken switch from concern for Giovanni to concern with the factory.

Any possible 'answer' to the 'tragedy' rests firmly in the sustained tension of looks between characters (especially between Adelfo and Laura), and is carefully orchestrated by continuous turning of heads, by movements away from the camera, and by flowing gestures that conceal and match the fluidity of the camera. The characters are forever looking beyond and to the side of the frame; they peer into the distance with binoculars, or at reflections, or through windows. Crucial in this elaborate construction is the notion that Primo is essentially blind to the world around him, that even with his binoculars he is interested only in getting a good close-up of a tomato picker's posterior or surveying his territory (the flat lands of the Emilia region which are his "ocean"). When Barbara takes the binoculars away from him (after they have returned from the forest), she has also been 'blinded'—witness the conversation at the numerologist's where she refuses to accept the evidence of her son's death. And yet it is her act of faith, and her determination in the conversation on the rooftop (borrowed straight from Pasolini's poetry) to reject Primo's equation (sons equal monsters—they have either too much contempt or too much admiration) that *effectively* brings Giovanni back.

Don Ranvaud

BRECHT AND CINEMA

Although Brecht died just before his theatre company, the Berliner Ensemble, made their first visit to Britain in 1956, his work has had an important presence in British culture ever since. Primarily that presence has worked to establish the relationship between art and politics as a central issue. For many people this coupling of art with politics may not seem a particularly attractive prospect. The notion of political art for many people conjures up impressions of narrow and restricted work likely to produce boredom and frustration.

Brecht's work still does have overtones of this kind attached to it. Brechtian theatre is taken to be a synonym for boring theatre. But increasingly over the past twenty years a better acquaintance with his work has shown such a view to be unfair. If anything Brecht worked to open up questions about the relationship between art and politics rather than to close them down on the basis of one simple dogmatic position.

This opening up can be seen in the way Brecht has influenced the situation in Britain. That influence can be divided into two phases. The first 'popular' phase stressed Brecht's concerns to relate drama to social groups who were normally absent from conventional theatre. This led to a search for popular conventions and a willingness to work outside the established theatrical framework. It helped produce much of the most interesting work in British theatre over the past twenty years (the work of groups like Red Ladder, 7:84, Belt and Braces, Monstrous Regiment; the writings of John Arden, Howard Brenton, John McGrath, Edward Bond etc.). Some of this work inevitably influenced film and television: for example, the adaptation for television of 7:84's *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black, Black Oil* and Jack Gold's version of Brecht's 'The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui', *The Gangster Show*.

The second 'avant-garde' phase stressed Brecht's concern with artistic form and his theory of alienation. This led to attempts at changing the relationship between art work and audience through the development of new forms. It has had a crucial effect on the character of independent film-making in recent years.

This season is designed to be wide ranging, illustrating different areas of Brecht's influence on the cinema. As a Marxist artist, Brecht is best known as a poet and dramatist. What is not so well known is his contribution to cinema. This contribution can be approached in three ways. First, in his theatre work Brecht frequently used film extracts as a way of breaking down the rigid confines of naturalistic drama, the most famous being the inclusion of Eisenstein's *Strike* at the end of 'Mother Courage'. This short season, secondly, points to Brecht's involvement in the film industry in both his own country, Germany, and in Hollywood, when, in exile from the fascists, he collaborated with Fritz Lang and resumed his working relationship with Kurt Weill and Hans Eisler. The third strand in this programme points to the influence of Brechtian aesthetics on post-war radical film-making: for example, films by Godard, Straub and (in England) Stewart MacKinnon and Ed Bennet.

In short, the series includes films Brecht was directly involved with; films made from his plays; and films inspired by his ideas. We hope it will be a testament to his approach.

To complement the season there will be a discussion afternoon on Saturday, June 10, when invited speakers (to be confirmed) will discuss Brecht's contribution to radical film and theatre in Britain. A screening of Jack Gold's *The Gangster Show* accompanies this event.

Alan Lovell and Roger Shannon

We would like to thank the Goethe Institute for financial assistance with this event.



Bertolt Brecht

YOU AND ME

(April 3)

You and Me, produced and directed for Paramount by Fritz Lang, completed the social trilogy that he began with *Fury* and *You Only Live Once*.

Lang imitates the technique of Brecht by creating a Lehrstück, a play that teaches: the lesson taught here is that 'crime doesn't pay'. Kurt Weill, Brecht's collaborator on *The Threepenny Opera*, composed the music to the lyrics of Sam Coslow which opens the film, sung over a montage of jewels, perfumes and delicacies. Later, a choral chant is sung over images depicting the prison background of ex-convicts. It was this aspect of the film that most critics responded to at the time, seeing in it 'something important yet to come in the use of sound pictures'.

George Raft plays Joe Dennis, an ex-con who is given employment at a department store which follows the benevolent practice of taking on former felons. Dennis organises a gang to 'roll' the store; the owner discovers the plot and then, faithful to his benevolence, allows them to return to his employ. Helen Roberts (played by Sylvia Sydney), Dennis's wife and an ex-con herself, then conducts the Lehrstück by proving at a blackboard that the robbery would not have been profitable.

(Director: Fritz Lang. U.S.A., 1938. With: Sylvia Sydney, George Raft, Robert Cummings. Black and white. Certificate A. 90 mins.)

Supporting film:

A GOOD EXAMPLE—BRECHT BEFORE H.U.A.C.

Brecht, when in Hollywood in the late Forties, was hauled up before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (H.U.A.C.). Along with many others during this 'witch hunt of the left', Brecht had to testify to his involvement in left-wing politics. This recent film (from A Good Example Film Group) reconstructs his testimony before the Committee, while overlaying on the

soundtrack Brecht's diary reflections on H.U.A.C. and the Hollywood Ten, as well as the statement prepared by Brecht which the Committee prevented him from reading.

The film presents Brecht as a 'good example' of a dramatist and writer, for whom artistic vision and social purpose were conceived of as one.

(Directors: Bertrand Sauzier, A Good Example Film Group. U.S.A., 1980. Black and white. 31 mins. 16 mm.)

DEATH BY HANGING

(April 10)

Japanese films have most often been discussed in terms of their seeming isolation from European/American culture. Oshima's films seem surprising in that they inevitably call to mind the methods of Brecht and Godard. In *Movie* (No. 17) Ian Cameron wrote of this film:

"On the strength of the techniques used in *Death by Hanging* and *Shinjuku Thief*, one or two critics have written off Oshima as a mere imitator of Godard. But the structural boldness of these films is entirely Oshima's. Look, for example, at *Death by Hanging*, where he investigates the circumstances surrounding a real murder and execution by taking the fictional premise that the hanging hasn't worked and, in order to persuade the man of his guilt, the functionaries have to act out the crime and its background, a concept which is further complicated by the illusory presence in the execution chamber of the man's sister and by the fact that the functionaries knock off at one point for a few drinks and reminisce about themselves around the recumbent forms of the man and the illusory sister.

"Within the strangeness of the forms he adopts, and in spite of certain comprehension problems which are inevitable for a Western audience, Oshima is the least inscrutable of all Japanese directors. This is not to deny that his films are extremely demanding of his audience, but to say they are susceptible to (and indeed reward) perfectly conventional analysis: they do not have to be treated as exotic art objects surrounded with an aura of mystery."

DEATH BY HANGING (Koshikei). Director: Nagisa Oshima. Japan, 1968. With: Kei Sato, Yun-Do Yun, Fumio Watanabe. Black and white. English subtitles. Cert. X. 117 mins.

LE GAI SAVOIR (Joyful Knowledge)

(May 1)

Echoes of Brecht are scattered throughout the work of Jean-Luc Godard. How intelligently Godard has responded to Brecht's ideas is a key question for determining the value of Brecht's work for the contemporary cinema. *Le Gai Savoir* is a central film for any attempt to answer this question as it confronts a key Brechtian theme, the politics of artistic form.

"The necessary link between politics and the image which illuminates the whole of Godard's work...finds one of its clearest statements in the film that Godard shot for French television before May 1968. Entitled *Le Gai Savoir (Joyful Knowledge)*, the film was proposed as an adaptation for television of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's eighteenth-century treatise on education, *Emile*...The film consists of a series of conversations in a darkened television studio between two characters...For Godard, and for the

characters in the film, the central problem of education is to provide some understanding of the sounds and images that bombard us in our daily lives. Such an understanding must be based on grasping the relation between sound and image because until we grasp that we will not, in the words of *Le Gai Savoir*, be able to make real television or cinema. Instead all that we can engage in is a repetition of sounds and images in which we are controlled by a language that we do not understand—an ignorance that applies just as much to the makers of television or film as it does to viewers.”—Colin McCabe/*Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*.

LE GAI SAVOIR (*Joyful Knowledge*). Director: Jean-Luc Godard. France/W. Germany, 1968. With Juliet Berto, Jean-Pierre Léaud. Colour. French dialogue/English subtitles. Cert. X. 91 mins.

Supporting film:

BECAUSE I AM KING

Made in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1979, *Because I am King* brings together material from a variety of sources, including a seventeenth-century tale, a film made on Tyneside in 1943 for the C.O.I., and a performance of the *Lehrstück* written in 1929 by Hindemith from a text by Brecht. The film demonstrates the way in which a number of writers (Jack Common, Bertolt Brecht, Abiezer Coppe) have presented history and politics through their work.

The originality of Stewart McKinnon's film lies in the Brechtian manner that the (often opposing) concerns of regional cinema and art cinema are brought into fruitful collaboration. The regional impetus is firmly evident in the recurring discussion of the current 'de-industrialisation' of the North-East; but this approach is given historical weight by the inclusion of extracts from *The Tyneside Story*, a state-sponsored film from 1943 dealing with unemployment and industry in the region. Scripted by Jack Common, a Tyneside worker-writer, *The Tyneside Story* was an archival discovery by independent film-makers in the North-East. It was made to encourage skilled workers previously sacked from the shipyards to come back and build new ships for the war effort. The extracts from this film, however, are not innocently used as standard reference points for the past but starkly re-used and re-positioned alongside clear *homages* to the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi—a device that powerfully negates the connotations of linear history that archival film frequently generates. Furthermore, the *homage* to Mizoguchi isn't restricted to direct quotation (for example, the sequence on the bridge) but extends across the film, informing its visual appearance: composition, natural beauty (even industrial landscapes) and still life (the composition of bottle, fish and glass) counterimposed against a reading from Marx's *Capital*: "Imagine that this is the fishing industry."

A performance by the Northern Sinfonia Chorus of Brecht's *Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* (its first public performance in Britain) completes the film. Again in this section questions of region and of culture are brought to the fore. The Northern Sinfonia, dressed for a public performance, enact the *Lehrstück* in a deserted factory setting: a factory owned by Vickers but now, in the recession, permanently closed, with the workforce entering long-term unemployment. The theme of the *Lehrstück* is also industrial decline; the references telescope back and forth, alerting us to the argument in *The Tyneside Story* and its ambivalent celebration of revived state intervention in the North-East economy.

Because I am King relies for its political originality on Stewart McKinnon's Brechtian commitment to initiate new methods, new techniques; in this case a reworking of certain regional and art cinema concerns.

Roger Shannon.

(Director: Stewart McKinnon. G.B., 1979. Black and white. 76 mins. 16 mm.)

THE LIFE STORY OF BAAL

(May 8)

The Life Story of Baal (directed by Ed Bennett for the British Film Institute) is based on the play 'Lebenslauf des Mannes Baal' by Brecht. This play was an abridged and transformed version of a much longer play — Brecht's earlier and more famous 'Baal'. 'Lebenslauf des Mannes Baal' had only one performance, a matinee in 1926 at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. The original play had been much more a celebration of individual revolt than the later, shorter version.

In the prologue to the shorter version Brecht wrote: "This dramatic biography shows the life story of the man Baal as it took place in the first part of the century. You see before you Baal the abnormality trying to come to terms with the twentieth century world. Baal the relative man, Baal the passive genius, the whole phenomenon of Baal from his first appearance among civilised beings up to his horrific end, with his unprecedented consumption of ladies of high degree in his dealings with his fellow humans."

Although set at the turn of the century, the film is about the present day. The film explores the possibility of showing on the screen not only a man's life but also the mythology giving it meaning.

Bennett here comments on his approach as a filmmaker to the question of play-film adaptation: "Because it's derived from a stage play, the action in *The Life Story of Baal* is of a special kind — within each scene it's completely continuous, spatially and temporally. This is a very different conception to the one you find in most films where even within pieces of 'continuous' action there are lots of little ellipses to speed up and concentrate the action by 'cutting out the boring bits', so that the narrative can keep moving forward in the most economical way possible. Generally speaking, the action only exists for the camera's sake...in this film I wanted to make it clear that the action had its own logic and its own time, which wasn't identical with the camera's logic and time. In a sense I tried to shoot the film like a documentary, where the camera operator plunges into a situation and as long as he or she keeps their finger on the button they'll film whatever happens in front of the lens...this is why there are so few long shots in the film, because I wanted to give the impression that the camera was slicing into something that pre-existed it."

(Director: Edward Bennett. G.B., 1978. With: Neil Johnston, Patti Love, Jeff Rawle. Colour. 58 mins. 16 mm.)

Supporting film:

THE CHEVIOT, THE STAG AND THE BLACK, BLACK OIL

One of the most interesting attempts so far to unite television, radical history and a Brechtian approach to drama is the television adaptation of the 7:84 play 'The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil' (written by John McGrath and directed by John Mackenzie for the B.B.C. in 1974).

From the montage of shots in the main titles (a truck on a building site; a highlander chased by redcoats; an oil rig; an aristocrat shooting deer; a gas jet ignited on an oil rig), a conceptual relationship is established clearly linking the Highland Clearances of the nineteenth century, the development of Highland Game Parks towards the end of that century, and the exploitation of the Highlands in the off-shore 'oil boom' of the 1970s.

Mixing gestural forms more associated with the circus and the music hall, and incorporating songs, story telling and interviews, the programme abandons the conventional naturalism of confining the actors and actresses to particular 'characters'. Thus, in the course of *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* a player may fulfil the roles of narrator, singer, scene-shifter, nineteenth-century land speculator, twentieth century property speculator, and Texas oil magnate. This device, and the obviously episodic form of the whole presentation, clearly indicate the Brechtian influence at work.

(Director: John Mackenzie. G.B., 1974. Colour. Uncertified. 90 mins.)

KUHLE WAMPE

(May 15)

Brecht made substantial contributions to the making of two films, *Hangmen Also Die* and *Kuhle Wampe*. Of the two, *Kuhle Wampe* best represents in terms of cinema the ideas Brecht spent his life trying to work out in the theatre. The film, which is in four parts, combined melodramatic elements (a suicide, an unwanted pregnancy) with political demonstration (a debate about the current economic crisis, descriptions of working class cultural activities). The quality that Brecht and his collaborators were aiming for is indicated in Brecht's ironic account of the objections that the censor made to the first part of the film:

"Yes, it will surprise you, but I object on the grounds that your portrayal does not seem to be human enough. You have not depicted a human being, but rather, let us admit it, a type. Your unemployed worker is not a real individual, with particular worries, particular pleasures, ultimately with a particular fate. He is very superficially portrayed. As artists, pardon me this strong expression for the fact that we learn too little about him, but the consequences are of a political nature, and this forces me to protest against the release of your film. Your film has the tendency to present suicide as typical, as a matter not of this or that (morbidly inclined) individual but as the fate of a whole class. It is your opinion that society induces young men to commit suicide by refusing them the possibility to work." (The censor.)

"We sat disconcerted. We had the unpleasant impression that we had been seen through...We had a hard time getting our film passed. Getting out of the building, we did not hide our esteem for the acute censor. He had penetrated far deeper into the substance of our artistic aims than our most well-wishing critics. He had read us a little lecture on realism. From the standpoint of the police." (Brecht)

KUHLE WAMPE (*Kuhle Wampe oder wem gehört die Welt*). Director: Slatan Th. Dudow. Germany, 1931. With: Hertha Thiele, Ernst Busch, Martha Wolter. Black and white. 73 mins.

Supporting film:

HISTORY LESSONS (Geschichtsunterricht)

History Lessons is based on Brecht's novel 'The Business Deals of Mr. Julius Caesar'. The following passage is taken from Martin Walsh's essay on the film (published in *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema*, BFI 1981):

"...this History Lesson is one whose *raison d'être* is exactly our contemporary situation — a period in which the heroisation of Caesar has been reinstituted by Mussolini, in which the mythologisation of individual "great men" is rampant (Churchill, Kennedy, etc.), in which the automobile has become the central "symbol of our times"...

"So the thrust of *History Lessons* will be to replace Caesar in a context that is useful for us today — an economic and social history that "wrests tradition away from conformism". Brecht's text blasts open the myth of the Roman Empire as a homogeneous unit with clearly defined aims, he reveals it to be riddled with contradictions, conflicts of interest (the slave issue, for example). It makes clear that a crucial issue is not Caesar himself, but where his ideas and power came from (the battles, struggles, persecutions of the Gracchi family). Gradually it becomes clear that Caesar is the prototype of the modern capitalist, and the drive sequences take on a further resonance: the car factories we never see are the modern version of what the Banker describes near the end of the film: "And the mountain valleys resound today with the peaceful hammering in the metal pits and with the merry call of the slaves."

"These pits and these slaves are what history books prefer to ignore, and Brecht's principal achievement is exactly the overturning of "tradition". To use Benjamin's phrase, Brecht "brushes history against the grain", and we may say the same of Straub/Huillet, in respect of their choice of texts to film."

(Directors: Jean-Marie Straub, Daniele Huillet. W. Germany/Italy, 1972. With Gottfried Bold, Johann Unterperfinger. Colour. 85 minutes. 16 mm. English subtitles.)



HANGMEN ALSO DIE

(May 22)

Brecht's enforced exile in the United States during the Second World War led him to make a sustained effort to work in Hollywood. Despite his determination to establish himself as a screen writer, Brecht had little success. Probably the effort was doomed from the start. The artistic tradition represented by Hollywood was too different from the one represented by Brecht for a fruitful relation to be established between them.

Hangmen Also Die was the nearest Brecht came to making a success in Hollywood. It was obviously a sympathetic project. The story was taken from the contemporary political situation—the killing of a hated German commander by Czech resisters. The director, Fritz Lang, came out of the same cultural background and political experiences as Brecht. Even with these factors in its favour, the project was a troubled one. Brecht had difficulties with Lang and even more with his American collaborator on the script, John Wexley.

The film can't be claimed to be a total success. Its interest, rather, lies in the indications it gives of the kind of cinema Brecht would have liked to create. There is clearly a struggle in the film to give the thriller plot a politically demonstrative character. The drama should both excite and educate. That Brecht wasn't able to work in Hollywood on a more regular basis was undoubtedly a great loss. *Hangmen Also Die* indicates that both Brecht and Hollywood might have profited if he had been able to do so.—Alan Lovell.

HANGMEN ALSO DIE. Director: Fritz Lang. U.S.A., 1943. With: Brian Donlevy, Walter Brennan, Anna Lee. Black and white. Cert. A. 131 mins.

MOTHER KRAUSEN'S JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS (Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück)

(May 29)

Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück belongs to a trio of films produced in Germany in the late 1920s that were strongly influenced by the emerging Soviet cinema. Along with Junghans's *So Ist das Leben*/*Such is Life* and Mittler's *Jenseits der Strasse*/*Harbour Drift*, *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* abandoned the studio-built proletarian surroundings of earlier German films, replacing them with documentary-type filming to support the 'veracity' of its North Berlin milieu. *Mutter Krausens* was at the culmination, in terms of quality and scope, of a series of attempts to create a German proletarian film. *Kuhle Wampe* has a

close relationship to it, insofar as both show the immiseration of the working class and the existence of a political force, the K.D.P., that is struggling to unite the people to overthrow the degraded world in which they live. Furthermore, each film has a strong basis in the family drama and the decline and fall of the family under the sway of unemployment. In each film a young proletarian woman is drawn, as a result of circumstances, into the revolutionary movement. In each, also, there is a wedding celebration and the important suicide of a proletarian figure.

(Director: Piel Jutzi. Germany, 1929. With: Alexandra Schmitt, Holmer Zimmermann, Ilse Trantschoed. Black and white. Silent. Certificate A. 106 mins. 16 mm. print.)

Supporting Film:

THE THIRD FRONT: ERWIN PISCATOR—POLITICAL THEATRE

Peter Wyeth's film for the Arts Council looks at the 'epic' approach to the theatre that Erwin Piscator established in the Twenties. Piscator, who had a strong influence on Brecht, moved theatre away from the confines of domestic naturalistic drama to take in the range of emerging twentieth-century media: film, slides, moving stages. This short film (mainly based on Piscator's montage book *Political Theatre*) focuses on both Piscator's politicization of the theatre and his concern to invent new forms appropriate to that polemic.

THE THREEPENNY OPERA (Die Dreigroschenoper/L'opéra de quat' sous)

(June 5)

"The first real Brecht film was *The Threepenny Opera*, which Pabst filmed in a French and German version in 1930-31. Following its author who referred to it as a 'pathetic botch-up', Brecht addicts tend to dismiss this work as a terrible travesty of the original...It was in fact an unforgettable film which not only captured far more of the essence of the original 1928 *Threepenny Opera* than any post-1945 performance but also went a good way to meeting Brecht's changing views of what the work was about. Its unforgivable offence in his eyes was that it did not meet them completely."—John Willett/*Times Literary Supplement*, May 1976. (Director: G.W. Pabst. Germany/France, 1931. With: Rudolf Forster, Carola Neher, Valeska Gert. Black and white. German dialogue/English subtitles. Cert. A. 100 mins.)

THE GANGSTER SHOW

(June 12)

Apart from his general effect on the approach of writers of television drama, Brecht also influenced television through the production of a number of his plays. Most of these productions have not been very distinguished—they have been too reverential and/or insensitive to the problems Brecht's methods create for television. *The Gangster Show*, which is an adaptation of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, is certainly one of the most interesting of the television productions. Its director, Jack Gold, has consistently been one of the most enterprising of television directors, while its star, Nicol Williamson, has always been ready to take chances and extend his range. *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* is basically a work of anti-fascist propaganda which has a particular interest because of the somewhat roundabout way Brecht approaches his task. The story, which is about the rise of a Fascist dictator, is transposed into an American gangster plot and then treated in a mock Shakespearean manner.—Alan Lovell. (Director: Jack Gold. G.B., 1972. With: Nicol Williamson, Sam Wanamaker, Phil Brown. 105 mins.)

ZU NEUEN UFERN (To New Shores)

(June 26)

"In the winter of 1936-37 Sirk was assigned the task of turning a new UFA discovery, the Swedish actress Zarah Leander, into a star. He cast her in a period melodrama, set largely in Australia in the nineteenth century: *Zu Neuen Ufern* (*To New Shores*). Opposite her he cast Willy Birgel...as a decadent, weak British officer who runs away to Australia to avoid his debts, incapable of taking responsibility for his own actions. Stylistically, *Ufern* is one of the most extraordinary films ever made: the main tradition to which it belongs is clearly that of Brecht and Weill—not just in the combination of music, songs and dialogue, but in the assemblage of contrasts, of light, of class, of geography. One scene in particular, the trial of Gloria Vane (Zarah Leander) represents a highly successful attempt to put the Weill-Brecht advances on to the screen. The scene is introduced with an old woman singing a song about Paramatta (the women's prison in Australia to which Leander is about to be consigned by a class-prejudiced court) outside the courtroom; she has a large placard with a number of pictures of Paramatta on it: the camera passes from her into the courtroom, where Leander is sentenced, back out to the woman in the street and then through a picture of Paramatta to Paramatta itself, baking in the bright Australian sun, as the camera moves straight to the prison church, whence issue the voices of the prisoners singing hymns. Cut to the governor's mansion where Birgel is languidly pursuing the governor's daughter."—Extract from an article on Sirk's German films by Jon Halliday, published by the 1972 Edinburgh Film Festival.

(Director: Detlef Sierck, later known as Douglas Sirk. Germany, 1937. With: Zarah Leander, Willy Birgel, Viktor Staal. Black and white. English subtitles. 106 minutes. 16 mm print.)



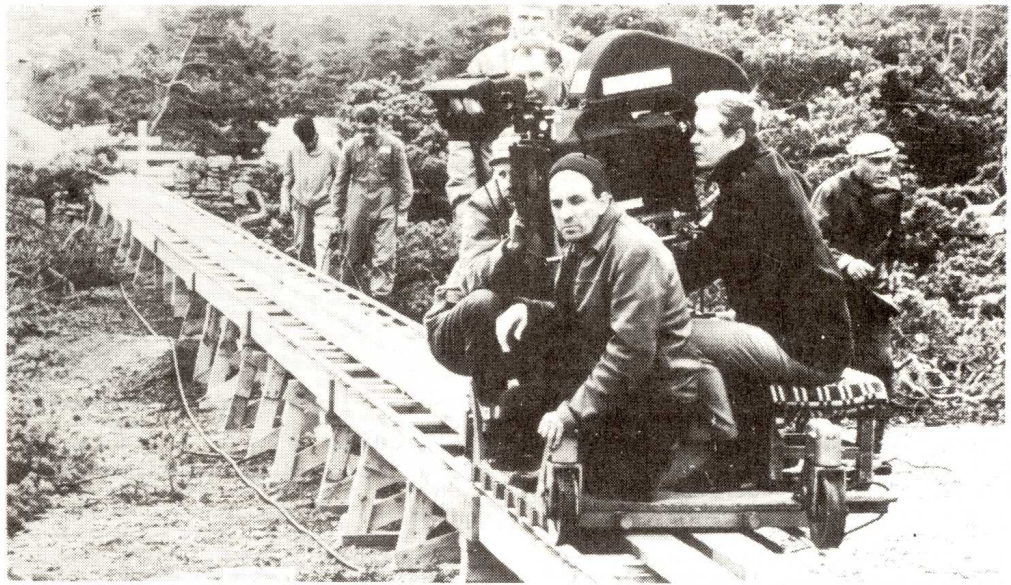
INGMAR BERGMAN (Part 2)

Bergman's later films have both continuities and discontinuities with those which came before. The most obvious new element is colour, above all from *A Passion* onward. The Expressionist use of red is especially notable, as in *Cries and Whispers* where the fades to red and the red décor link this colour forcefully with the past and its vampiristic draining away of vitality from the palely-clad women in the film's present-tense. The use of colour to signal and externalise inner tensions is one familiar melodramatic strategy, and it is of interest too, in this connection, that Bergman embraces popular generic forms in his work of this period. Thus, *Scenes From a Marriage* is a "high class soap opera," as one reviewer put it (Julian Jebb, *Sight and Sound*, vol. 44, No. 1)—though this need not be a damning indictment as I shall try to establish—and *The Touch* abandons both structural complexities and Swedish in a deliberate appeal to an English-speaking popular audience.

To some extent, Bergman's use of soap-operatic, and more generally melodramatic, conventions allows him to move from the metaphysical abstractions of many of his middle-period films to some form of social critique. For the melodramatic protagonist, as Robert Heilman and others have noted, is primarily in conflict not with herself/himself as in tragedy, but with society (whether viewed as external or as an internalised aspect of the self). Historically specific societies and their institutions (the bourgeois couple, the nuclear family)—and not some generalised "human condition"—transcending sociocultural distinctions—produce their good citizens and generate the dramas specific to themselves. So the tensions of *The Touch* and of *Scenes From a Marriage* are located in social (i.e. ideological) space: the ideology of the couple, of sexuality, is specifically what is at issue. Even *The Magic Flute*, a film largely determined by its Mozartian origins, is allied to the films of this period in structure and thematic concerns, its central oppositions embodied in the now explicitly marital conflicts between Sarastro and the Queen of the Night.

Along with the greater social specificity of these colour films, made possible by the partial yielding of Bergman's authorial omnipresence to the conventions of melodrama and soap opera (albeit "high class"), a more progressive attitude to women has emerged. Thus, for example, pregnancy in *The Touch* and *Scenes From a Marriage* is seen not as positive natural fulfilment alone (as in *So Near to Life*, *Wild Strawberries*, *Winter Light*, *Hour of the Wolf*), but rather as, among other things, ideological entrapment. It would be wrong, however, to conclude from the more popularly-styled films of the later period that all his later films are therefore equally progressive. The cases must be argued one by one. *Face to Face*, in particular, is a problem insofar as Jenny's bourgeois status and her femaleness alike become irrelevant to the film's depiction of who she is, and her crisis has no ideological dimension whatsoever.

The tension between analysis of human anguish in purely metaphysical terms seen as common to all human beings (we all grow old and die, we all seek love) and those in purely ideological terms seen as specific to one's culture and linked to class and sex (working-class anguish differing from bourgeois in its economic determinants and experiential symptoms, female anguish differing from male) is a fundamental one. Neither type of explanation is, by itself, sufficient, for they are inextricably connected, and in Bergman's other films from *A Passion* onward there is a growing acknowledgement of this interdependence. Both *A Passion* and *Cries and Whispers* reveal to a lesser or greater extent the ways women are defined within the parameters of the predominantly male point of view which our culture endorses; both *The Touch* and *Scenes From a Marriage* expose the specific entrapments of bourgeois marriage and the family; even *The Magic Flute*, through the relationship of Sarastro and the Queen of the Night, is centrally concerned with—while not exactly foregrounding—the specifically sexual myths of a patriarchal society.



These are far from being the only concerns of Bergman's most recent work, and his treatment of them upholds, in any case, no simple dogma. He has broken new ground, but the continuities with the past should not be overlooked.

Deborah Thomas

LECTURE/DISCUSSION

Deborah Thomas, who lectures on film at Sunderland Polytechnic, will discuss those Bergman films about which she has written in this programme on Sunday May 23 at 5.15 p.m. Admission free.

THE BERGMAN DRAMA

The complete portrait of Ingmar Bergman would have to take into account as much work in the theatre as on film. His filmography, it's disconcerting to realise, only gives us half the story and probably less—it's just not possible for long-distance Bergman admirers to trace with any precision how the experience of a given production may have inspired a subsequent screenplay, or how a theme on film may in turn have been pursued on stage. The one certainty is that there are overlaps at all levels—the use of theatrical devices in his films, the employment of many of the same actors, the allusions to theatrical style and convention as part of the substance of the Bergman message.

His use of lighting, for example, which Bergman himself has said is derived from his work in the theatre, is integral to his camera images; he has described how the sparkles of sunlight dappling a girl's face through the brim of her straw hat gave him the first ideas for *Persona*, although it's hard to imagine that the completed production could ever make sense on stage. With *The Rite* and *The Magic Flute*, he tinkers enthusiastically with three simultaneous media, creating films about theatre (and opera) for television. The contexts appear so interchangeable, and Bergman appears so fluent in each of them, that they are clearly drawn by the same train of thought; it's an added frustration, then, that his cinemagoing fellow-travellers can only witness a part of the journey.

But perhaps, even so, the screen gets the best of Bergman. If one had to summarise the major differences between Bergman's output before and after he launched into colour with *Now About These Women* (which, whatever else one might think of it, makes a very convenient punctuation point), they would be that his introspection has become a little more international—but only a little—and his soliloquies more direct. If his work has gained in structural complexity, it has also been pruned to a ruthless visual economy, within which have been presented a vivid range of magnificent acting performances. Today's Bergman is the master of intimate theatre, and his perpetual close-ups raise the curtain on a contemporary drama in which we are all participants.

Philip Strick

In addition to the films included in this programme (which covers the director's career since 1963), Bergman has also directed 'Stimulantia' ('Daniel' episode, 1967) and *Färö-Dokument/The Färö Documentary* (1969), neither of which are available in Britain. He is currently directing 'Fanny and Alexander', which is due to be released at Christmas.

NOW ABOUT THESE WOMEN (För att inte tala om alla dessa kvinnor)

(April 4)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1964.

Script: Ingmar Bergman, Erland Josephson, under the pseudonym Buntel Ericsson.

Photography: Sven Nykvist

Music: Erik Nordgren.

Leading Players: Jarl Kulle (*Cornelius*), Bibi Andersson (*Humlan-Bumble Bee*), Harriet Andersson (*Isolde*), Gertrud Fridh (*Traviata*), Eva Dahlbeck (*Adeladide*), Mona Malm (*Cécilia*).

Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate X. 80 minutes. 16 mm print.

Between the twin summits of *The Silence* (1962) and *Persona* (1966) lies an unusually featureless patch in Bergman's career, punctuated only by the one film in his entire output for which hardly a voice has ever been heard in praise. At the time, it seemed as though with the trilogy completed by *The Silence* he had burned himself out; *Now About These Women* appeared as a trivial postscript, a banal piece of self-indulgence, bitter, unfunny, and best forgotten. There was no way of knowing that *Persona* was to follow, but with the shock of the 'new' Bergman there seemed even less reason to waste time on the lesser achievements of the artist who had now emerged so dazzlingly from a four-year pupation.

Looking back, when it's hardly possible not to look with interest at anything directed by Bergman—even his television commercials for bath-soap—it would be pleasing to rediscover *Now About These Women* as a much-misunderstood master-piece, too long overlooked. Misunderstood it may have been, but masterpiece it isn't. One has to admit immediately that it is an exceedingly difficult film to like, although there are aspects of it which are quite enchanting. Comedy in Bergman has always been on the ponderous side, although usually lightened by the performances (as in *Smiles of a Summer Night*) and touches of amiable ridicule (the 'cupid'

in *Lesson in Love*). But every slapstick cliché seemed to have been assembled for *Now About These Women* and entrusted to Jarl Kulle for the purposes of unrestrained buffoonery; one has the sense of being a neglected guest at an incestuous game of charades being played by a close-knit family almost incoherent at its own jokes.

And yet the film has as many avenues of approach as the magical villa that provides its setting. To start with the obvious, it makes a delightful introduction of colour into Bergman's work, opening with the black-and-white decor of the funeral introduction and growing increasingly brighter until the outburst of a full-scale fireworks display. Bergman has never relinquished entirely the attractions of monochrome (as shown most recently in *Marionettes*, where colour is confined to its own special psychological territory), and with his use of blacks and whites in costume and settings he conducts an intricate experiment in *Now About These Women* that almost renders the narrative superfluous. 'Any resemblance between this film and so-called reality must be a mistake' comes the barbed prefatory credit (which is echoed by later warnings like the title indicating that the fireworks should not be taken symbolically), and while it does nothing, of course, to lull the attention, it is a reassuring clue to the Bergman motive. In *Persona*, too the vocabulary of the purely visual was to be examined with a new freedom; *Now About These Women* can accordingly be seen as a first step away from conventional sequential story-telling.

It does have a story, though, of sorts. Jarl Kulle plays a music critic who is compiling the biography of a world-famous cellist, Felix, who has invited him to his summer residence, thickly populated by the women in his life (and, one might guess, in Bergman's). The critic, of course, is a pretentious ass, treated with suitable scorn by the cellist's entourage; but Felix, whom we never see face-to-face, is slowly corrupted by the image his admirers have of him until his reality as an artist is threatened. He tries to avoid danger by acting the recluse, communicating only by means of his music which instantly silences the squabbling ladies demanding their share of his life. But the isolation only renders him vulnerable to another danger—that of becoming unchanged and unchangeable, a sterile, colourless performer.

As a *cri de coeur*, it has almost too recognisable a Bergman tone. The struggling artist, torn to pieces by his contemporaries, was to be found in *Sawdust and Tinsel* and in *Hour of the Wolf* or *Serpent's Egg*, and one has to admit that his surroundings suit him better in these alternatives. It's startling, even so, to realise that the beautiful scene in which Felix plays the cello (with his back to the camera) amid the enraptured group of women, is presented in exactly the same set-up as the remembered performance by Ingrid Bergman's cellist lover in *Autumn Sonata*. Bergman may have been determined to enjoy himself with some harmless nonsense when he set out to create *Now About These Women*, taking advantage of the event to surround himself with an enviable flock of charming actresses, but the predicament he illustrates turns out unavoidably to possess an authentic agony—one that he has continued to diagnose (and possibly, briefly, alleviate) ever since.

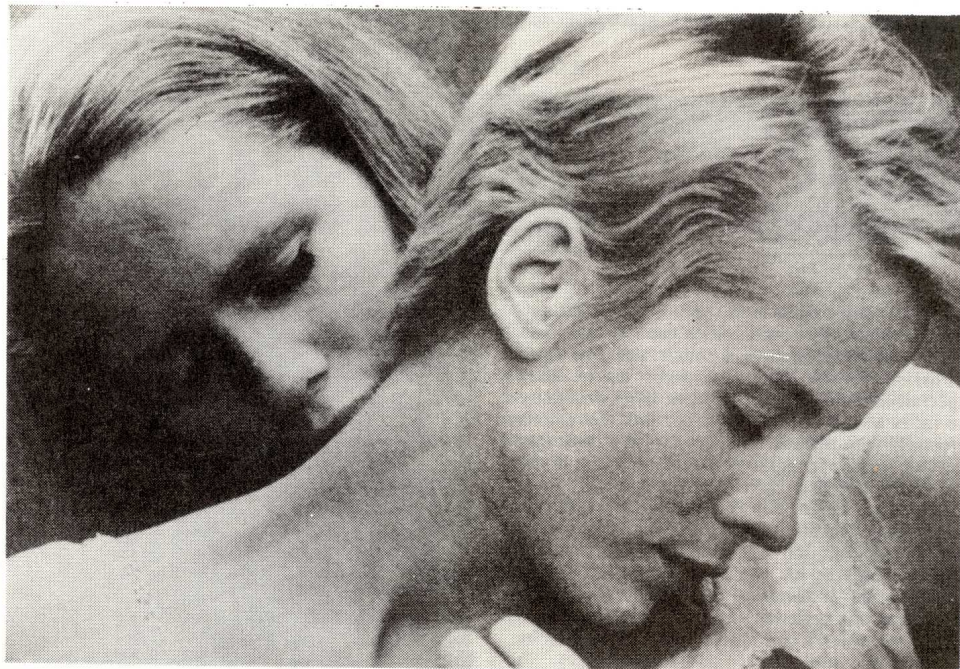
Philip Strick

Supporting film:

THE DOVE

"Spoken in pidgin Swedish and accompanied by copious English subtitles, *The Dove* is a hilarious if ultimately slightly facile parody of Ingmar Bergman's films. Sidney Davis' script makes no distinction between Bergman's social realist period and his subsequent middle period of metaphysical questioning, and the juxtaposing of a lingering close-up of Sundqvist's soiled underpants to that of a cowed Death (with exaggerated Semitic mannerisms) suggests that what he is parodying is not so much Bergman's films as the popular stereotype of them; while in the final swimming scene his target seems to be extended to include stereotypes of the whole Swedish cinema. But these solemn critical reservations aside, the film is immensely amusing. And though nothing quite matches the ludicrous exertions of the badminton game with Death, the opening ride through the forest powerfully recreates—until the final scatological joke—the mood of *Wild Strawberries*.—*Monthly Film Bulletin* (May 1969).

(Directors: George Coe, Anthony Lover. U.S.A. 1967-68., With: David Zirlin, George Coe, Pamela Burrell. Black and white. 16 mins.)



PERSONA

(April 18)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.

Sweden, 1966

Script: Ingmar Bergman.

Photography: Sven Nykvist.

Music: Lars Johan Werle.

Leading Players: Bibi Andersson (*Alma*), Liv Ullmann (*Elisabeth Vogler*), Margareta Krook (*Doctor*), Gunnar Björnstrand (*Mr. Vogler*), Jörgen Lindström (*boy*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate X. 84 minutes.

"The themes of *Persona* can be traced back readily enough through Bergman's previous work to his early films. Apart from obvious innovative features of style and method, what strikes one most in it—and what is the outcome of the prolonged and rigorous self-disciplining of the Trilogy—is its artistic impersonality: its distancing and universalising of Bergman's personal concerns....

"The film is not so much about an exchange of identities on the personal level, as about a merging of two representative consciousnesses, or the process whereby the protective façades people erect to defend themselves from reality are broken down. Alma's 'normality', and its precarious and illusory nature, are touchingly observed and described. She represents our daily selves: Elisabeth our deeper and acuter awareness. The nurse's uniform is itself a mask, an assumed identity, Alma's image of herself as she wants to appear, both in the world's eyes and in her own: she reassumes it in the film's climactic sequences (either in reality or in imagination or both) in a final attempt to re-establish the identity that has by now irretrievably crumbled. Other details sketch in Alma's surface-identity (at the start of the film, the only one she is aware of): as she stands before the psychiatrist, the camera moves down to show her hands clasped behind her back, the stance of a good, obedient school-girl before the headmistress; introducing herself in her chatty-and-efficient manner, she tells Elisabeth [the actress she is assigned to nurse] that she is 25, engaged to be married, and that her mother was also a nurse.

"The precariousness of Alma's protective façade is immediately apparent in her desire to give up the case. She tells the psychiatrist that she 'may not be able to cope—mentally'; Elisabeth's refusal to speak or act shows 'great strength', and clearly frightens her; without realizing it, she feels it as a personal threat. The other woman's silence, in fact, begins to break down Alma's defences at once....

"What Alma is led to discover during the course of the film is quite simply what is within herself, and potentially within all of us, fear that existence may be meaningless; uncertainty as to where 'acting' stops and 'being' begins; sexual confusion (Eliot's 'may and may not, desire and control');

resort under pressure to 'primitive' savagery. The second half of the film conveys a sensation of sinking into a dark, perhaps bottomless abyss of uncertainties, both for the women and for the spectator....

"The thematic movement of *Persona* is, up to half-way, expressed through a clearly developed, meticulously observed 'naturalistic' fiction: one could list at length the details of psychological insight manifest in the *mise-en-scène*. The moment when Alma, the nice, normal, altruistic young nurse, is forced to confront her own potential for cruelty in the incident with the broken glass completes the exposition of her discovery of reality (the reality of herself) through her experience of Elisabeth. At that point Bergman chooses to disrupt the film. The opening shots, showing technical details of film projection, constitute some warning of what is going to be done to us, but they don't really prepare us for the shock, engrossed as we are in the narrative. After the depiction of the projector-breakdown, the 'naturalistic' drama is resumed, but we can no longer feel in quite the same relation to it: our sense of security has been (like Alma's) irreparably undermined, and from here on we have the constant feeling that *anything* may happen. As the second half develops, doubts begin to grow, at first almost imperceptibly but by the end very powerfully, about the nature of what we are watching...."

Robin Wood/Ingmar Bergman

HOOR OF THE WOLF (Vargtimmen)

(April 18)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.

Sweden, 1967.

Script: Ingmar Bergman.

Photography: Sven Nykvist.

Music: Lars Johan Werle.

Leading Players: Liv Ullmann (*Alma Borg*), Max von Sydow (*Johan Borg*), Erland Josephson (*Baron von Merckens*), Gertrud Fridh (*Corinne von Merckens*), Gudrun Brost (*Old Lady*), Bertil Anderberg (*Ernst von Merckens*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate X. 89 minutes. 16 mm print.

Bergman has always been at pains to establish that within the arch of his own proscenium anything can happen, and that when it does it will be, in several senses, his own affair. The purpose is on the one hand to remind his audience that even a one-act play requires a *deus ex machina*, on the other to stress that just as words are inadequate communication symbols for pure thought, so drama is merely an attempt to formulate for easier comprehension concepts normally too abstract to be defined.

So *Hour of the Wolf*, one of the cinema's great Gothic fantasy films made in the same amazing

year as *Persona*, one of the cinema's greatest ever, is a succession of deceptive curtain-raising, each leading us into deeper darkness until, like the exhausted couple keeping each other awake until dawn, we can conjure demons out of nothing. To start, the Bergman proscenium. Behind simple credits, the racket of stagehands at work, dwindling to a hush as the scene is set. Added insulation as a narrator (Bergman himself?) puts the whole thing on the level of a dry report. Then, as yet another complication, Alma Borg, in contrite and inarticulate bewilderment, gives her version of the circumstances of her husband's disappearance from their island home.

Not until the flashbacks do we at last come to grips with what appear to be the basic facts, and these in turn convey a speedy unreliability. Did Alma really receive a visit from an old lady in white whose hand she might have held and whose words were sometimes lost in the roar of the seas, or did she invent her (based on a sketch by her husband) to conceal her guilty intrusion into the secrets of Johann's diary? Worse, although we may assume that her recollection of the diary entries is accurate, does the diary itself report truths or inventions, genuine or imagined hallucinations?

Actually it's possible to chart the probable collisions between reality and unreality in *Hour of the Wolf* from the evidence provided by husband or wife or both, taking roughly into account the stages of their mental disintegration, and deduce that all their scenes together are 'real', that most of the scenes at the castle are distorted 'reality', and that all the scenes described only in Johann's diary (plus the murder) are 'unreal'. But to sift through the film in this way is to imply that parts of it can be disregarded or discarded altogether in favour of a tidy account of psychopathic degeneration. They can't. *Hour of the Wolf* contrives to be another step forward on the path that could honourably have reached its destination with *Persona*, and it does so by approaching the *Persona* argument from a fresh and splendidly sardonic tangent, and by enriching it with several layers of illustration.

The richest is the link with 'The Magic Flute'. Controlled by the satanic impresario Lindhorst (on whose face a shadow flings the greasepaint smile of a clown), yet another curtain rises, to reveal Tamino with the song of mingled despair and hope (*O ew'ge Nacht*) that is at the same time a hymn to a love worth seeking and an apology for unfamiliarity with the rules of Freemasonry (representing, one might interpret, the established society from which Johann is an outcast). It's a hefty clue, and there's a case to be made for relating everyone from Bergman downwards to the dying Mozart and his chameleon-like characters, whether or not one can strain this further than the astonishing scene in which Lindhorst/Papageno conducts Johann/Tamino along a corridor thick with wings to the room of Veronica/Pamina. "You see what you want to see," calls the Bird Man, feathers and all.

However, the subsequent destruction of Johann by his jealous admirers who, having laughed him to scorn, proceed to tear him to bits (they have, after all, found his replacement already in the pallid form of Kapellmeister Kreisler), is hardly vintage Mozart so much as undiluted Bergman for whom, as he so ruthlessly pointed out in *As For All These Women*, critics were ever a fickle bunch...

Philip Strick

THE SHAME (Skammen)

(April 21)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1968.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist.
Leading Players: Liv Ullmann (*Eva Rosenberg*), Max von Sydow (*Jan Rosenberg*), Gunnar Björnstrand (*Colonel Jacobi*), Brigitta Valberg (*Mrs. Jacobi*), Sigge Füst (*Filip*), Hans Alfredson (*Lobelius*).
Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate X. 102 minutes.

Eva and Jan Rosenberg, violinists in a symphony orchestra that is now disbanded, have taken up farming on an island where they can feel safely detached from the war raging not far away on the mainland. But soon the war spreads like a disease

to the island community, and the two of them, as they had feared, are worn down, brutalised, and cast aimlessly adrift in the flotsam of a disintegrating world.

Bergman's most 'open' comment on the haunted international malaise of the 1960s came as no surprise in the context of Jancsó's allegories and Godard's polemic, although it was certainly notable as a departure from *Persona* and *Hour of the Wolf*—no flashbacks, no fantasies, and barely a touch of the eccentric. Bergman seemed increasingly dissatisfied with his role as artist-hermit, surveying the world from a comfortable vantage point and scorning both its neglect and its praise. At one time his characters could combat outside intrusions with ease, dismissing the symbols of militarism (as in *The Silence*) with the innocent shrug of a child, but gradually the stench of war had filtered through. In *The Shame*, Bergman blew his once inviolable island into thunderous chunks of immediacy, flames, torture, execution, the lot. Fårö survived, of course, to be the home to further anguished Bergman marriages, but the later debates were no longer conveniently apart from the awareness that Vietnam had existed and could exist again.

The Shame, in melancholy frenzy, tears up the common decencies like pages from an outdated calendar. Gone are such trivia as love, trust, friendship, an original Dvorak score, a violin dating from 1814. After witnessing the passing of these ancient and irrelevant matters, Bergman's human driftwood is sucked back into the sea that has always lapped at the shores of their lives, and participates in a floating nightmare. Through Eva and Jan, *The Shame* refers to dreams three times: at the beginning, when he wishes they were back in the secure democracy of the orchestra; in the middle, when she can only believe that they are in someone else's dream; and at the end, when she describes how, clutching the daughter she never had, she watched a bombing raid. "I knew I ought to remember something that someone had said—but I'd forgotten what it was". Spoken softly and blankly, the words come like an epitaph to a world for which Bergman could foresee no salvation. It's time, the film suggests, for men to abandon their extraordinary games and to revert to the things that matter, assuming anybody can remember what these are. Fourteen years later, unimaginably, the games are still being played and *The Shame* could have been made just yesterday.

The film is also about betrayal, a sickness which spreads out almost tangibly from the fisherman, Filip, until he slips despairingly into the sea. The Rosenbergs betray each other, they're betrayed by their television 'interviewers', they betray the savour-betrayer Jacobi, and they kill the exhausted young soldier who trusts them. Finally, of course, they have betrayed themselves—the dreams of learning Italian, of resuming their music, of starting a family, the whole array of sunlit promises made shortly before bombs and a dead parachutist land on their doorstep. Once upon a time (around about *Smiles of a Summer Night*), deceit was something of an elegant and charming romp. After *The Shame*, Bergman no longer found it so.

Yet while he filmed in grim sincerity, there was still space for flashes of the old humour: the antiquarian wineseller who suddenly reveals that he pays his charlady to make love to him, the chicken that stands unscathed before a trembling rifle, or the obscure remark about the musical Mr. Kreisler (who seems, like the von Sydow-Ullmann unit itself, to have survived intact from the previous film). Despairing and brutal as it is, *The Shame* is crafted with such humanity and care that it adds the unexpected to the unthinkable—Armageddon with a touch of beauty.

Philip Strick



THE RITE (Riten)

(May 2)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1969.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist.
Leading Players: Ingrid Thulin (*Thea von Ritt Winklemann/Claudia Monteverdi*), Anders Ek (*Albert Emanuel Sebastian Fisher*), Gunnar Björnstrand (*Hans Winklemann*), Erik Hell (*Judge Abrahamson*), Ingmar Bergman (*Priest*).
Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate X. 74 minutes.

At the beginning of *The Rite*, the examining magistrate stares intensely through a magnifying glass at us, the audience: his authority is painstaking, and we are made uneasy by its scrutiny. But with the next shot we switch to his viewpoint and study with him the trio of strolling players who are to be interrogated, their photographs cheerfully beguiling, their costumes clownish, their name disarming, 'Les Riens'. The impartiality with which Bergman encourages us to take both sides of his arguments has seldom been more clearly demonstrated: we are to be both prosecution and defence in a process of distinctly theological self-analysis.

So that we need be in no doubt by the end of *The Rite* that the character of the magistrate is no more pristine than those of 'Les Riens', hauled before him to answer for the alleged obscenity of one of the scenes in their show, his vices are seen to match theirs in direct parallel. Violent, unscrupulous and solitary, lustfully precipitate, he is as they are in all but one vital respect, but it is this single difference that is the heart of Bergman's tale. For the judge is only an observer, whereas 'Les Riens' are performers and the mysterious magic of the theatre is at their command.

Each of the nine question-and-answer sessions in *The Rite* is formally heralded by a scene-setting announcement and concluded by a number of dissonant chords of an untuned piano, devices which stress the artificiality of the *Kammerspiel* method of confining drama to a small group of players in uncluttered surroundings. They confirm in the most direct manner possible that the ritual of dramatic presentation has a transcendent charge too powerful for analysis—that in a sense there is no case to answer. Amid surroundings pruned of detail, their supposed deeds compounded of betrayal, violence and fallibility, Bergman's actors prove the point by instantly persuading us to accept their masquerade. What matters in the film is not so much the final enactment of the controversial performance itself as the fascination of what has led up to it. The artists have demonstrated their power for us long before they're required to do so for the interrogator in the film.

If any justification were indeed required for the continuation of 'Les Riens', it is illustrated by the hallucinatory nature of their off-stage confrontations, their mesmeric ability to set their fictional world beside our real one and persuade us that both are the same (even to the extent that we share their wilder fantasies, like the apparent self-immolation of one of them). Although we have no need of the heavier symbolism—the devil/bird masks, the monstrous phalluses, the drinking of blood—and are not expected to share the judge's fate directly, our response to the subtler manifestations of all of these marks us as subscribers to the artist's worth from the moment we paid for our seats.

Such persuasion is hardly new to Bergman, who was making out the same case eleven years earlier with the remarkably similar events of *The Face*. With its lesser preoccupations too, *The Rite* is familiar territory: sexual and social humiliation, martial instability (with a tiny *Sawdust and Tinsel* reference at the key moment), the search for God and identification with the sufferings of Christ, physical and mental decay, and the need to hide behind a veneer of greasepaint and costume. These insistent echoes resound more stridently in *The Rite* than elsewhere in Bergman mainly, one suspects, because it was made for a smaller screen (it was shown by Swedish television in March 1969). Certainly its affirmation of artistic worth is an aggressively head-on affair, suggesting that despite earlier qualms the magician was now due for a renewal of confidence.

Philip Strick

THE LIE

(May 2)

Director: Alan Bridges.

Great Britain, 1970.

Script: Ingmar Bergman (translation by Paul Bitten Austin).

Photography: Brian Tufano.

Music: Marc Wilkinson.

Leading Players: Frank Finlay (*Andrew Firth*), Gemma Jones (*Anna Firth*), John Carson (*Ellis*), Joss Ackland (*Albert*), Caroline Blakinston (*Nurse Esther*), Richard O'Sullivan (*Whiteley*).

Colour. English dialogue. 94 minutes.

"People seem to have been more sick this year than ever before. Infections last longer. People are so tired they don't know what to do with themselves." The diagnosis comes from a script written by Bergman at the end of the 1960s, somewhere (one guesses) in the wake of *A Passion* and a little before *The Touch*. Neatly translated for the BBC, the scarcely definable oddness of its tone fits perfectly into the somnambulist rituals of everyday middle-class British—indeed it would have transplanted equally well to any other nationality outside of the Third World. Things are slowly falling apart, says Bergman, and the Lie is the self-deceit whereby we persuade ourselves not to notice.

An average day in the decay of civilisation begins with distant salutations between Andrew Firth, an average sort of something-in-the-city, and his chilly, immaculate wife, too busy reading her inconsequential correspondence to acknowledge his departure for the office. The papers headline Vietnam, the radio speaks of an assassination, but at the office the talk is of the imminent Easter break, seemingly an interlude of anticipated tedium in the boring flow of commerce. Among the trivialities of conversation is the revelation that a major project of Andrew's has been rejected, possibly the result of a conspiracy on the part of a couple of colleagues he joins for lunch, but if the ground is giving way under his feet he is, of course, far too well-mannered to show any sign of it (other than snapping at his secretary, but she is naturally fair game). Later, he visits his specialist, but only the Nurse is in. "I don't know what's the matter with me—I feel as if I'm being stifled." She takes his pulse and gives him a stiff Scotch.

Meanwhile, Anna Firth, too, has been having an average sort of day, full of encounters that leave her solitary. Her brother is having some kind of breakdown in hospital; festooned with bracelets and eye-shadow, he scrapes at the window to the outside world from which he is now excluded. "I'm breaking off contacts," he tells Anna. "Do you imagine I can't see the approaching twilight?" As he punches himself repeatedly on the mouth, phrases tumble out, an incoherent warning about The Big Lie. In the afternoon, Anna sleeps with her lover in their tatty apartment with popular radio programmes seeping through the walls. They speak about their respective families in dull, conventional phrases, and sleep is about all they can achieve before she has to go home.

Alan Bridges (of *The Hiring* and of that modestly effective science fiction classic, *Invasion*) is a specialist in elegant understatement, and his filming of *The Lie*, just on the edge of satire, is superbly poised. The cast is also brilliantly judged, typified by Caroline Blakinston (for example) whose face contains so many messages when immobile that she hardly needs to speak at all. Frank Finlay, caught in 1970 just before his career was going into over-exposure, makes the perfect business executive, imperturbable, soft-spoken, conveying nothing of his frustration at a chillingly accurate committee meeting where all that's decided is the date of the next—nothing, that is, except by a certain angle of the shoulders and a dull gleam of the eyes. Bridges sets it all in glossy, soulless chrome and glass, with square, classic framing (in key with the Nykvist doctrine: "The simplest, that is the best"), and barely a tremble except for the perhaps unfortunate sudden upward scoop of the camera at the dinner table, when Anna begins to give way.

With its final third, *The Lie* becomes pure Bergman, requiring only that its cast and director keep pace with it. In the small hours of the morning, the Firths at last confront reality, beating away the encrustation of apathy that has

been choking them. Genuine contact, desperate and violent, is accomplished, and brutal truths are exposed, leaving them to stare at each other in the ruins of their insubstantial marriage." "Where do we go," she snarls, "after this sudden burst of honesty?" But like the shambling figure at the end of *A Passion*, a mass of indeterminate colours wandering to and fro across the frame of the screen, the husband in *The Lie* can see no alternative to the trap that so comfortably, so urbanely encloses them. "I think," he says, "that one has to lie in order to live together."

The films that Bergman made immediately after this script, *The Touch*, *Cries and Whispers*, and *Scenes from a Marriage*, reach much the same conclusion, sometimes despairingly, sometimes resignedly, sometimes with affection. While he's not disposed to give the Firths much comfort at the end of their average day, the treatment he has been suggesting for what ails them and their countless fellow-sufferers has the one virtue of honesty. *The Touch* (as its title affirms) pursues the theme of physical contact, *Cries and Whispers* grants the need for just a few warming illusions in family life, and *Scenes from a Marriage* demonstrates how two people can struggle through the pain, humility, and apathy of a love affair to find what Bergman perhaps regards as his best offer, a tolerant companionship. Everything's there already in *The Lie*, as it was also to be in *Marionettes*, balanced on a razor's edge.

Philip Strick

A PASSION (En Passion)

(April 21)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.

Sweden, 1969.

Script: Ingmar Bergman.

Photography: Sven Nykvist

Leading Players: Max von Sydow (*Andreas Winkelmann*), Liv Ullman (*Anna Fromm*), Bibi Andersson (*Eva Vergéus*), Erland Josephson (*Elis Vergéus*), Erik Hell (*Johan Andersson*), Sigge Fürst (*Verner*).

Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 101 minutes.

The film begins with Andreas on top of his house against the sky, repairing his roof which, the narrator tells us, "has long been in disrepair and after the last autumn rains... has started to leak in earnest." The film ends with Andreas on the ground in despair, as Anna drives off and the narrator tells us that "This time he was called Andreas Winkelmann." But Andreas's symbolic "fall" in the course of the film, and the universality of its implications, are already implicit in the opening sequence. The appearance of three suns in the sky, scientifically explicable but ominous nonetheless, is the most obvious counterpoint to Andreas's attempt, through the repairing of the leaky roof and his solitary life on the island, to make himself "secure" both physically and emotionally by sealing his house and himself off from the world outside. Less insisted upon is the bucket which falls off the roof to the ground and then, after Andreas picks it up and sets it down upright, falls over yet again. This incident is echoed throughout the film by a series of falling objects: Andreas drops a bucket of pine cones on finding the hanging dog, he drops a glass as he drinks gin at his wife's potter's wheel, he himself falls to the floor following the scene where Johan finds him in the snow and takes him home, Anna knocks over the chess-pieces in the game with Andreas, and she drops and spills a bowl of milk as she calls Andreas's name. The motif of falling objects which reverberates throughout the film, functions to suggest a variety of complex significances: the fragility and, indeed, the ultimate impossibility of human self-sufficiency (the buckets of mortar and pine cones), the lies and mutual destructiveness of human relationships (the chess pieces, the milk), the fall from grace such relationships involve (Andreas's progress from roof-top to ground, the dropping of the glass of gin).

The theme of the Fall, which if not central to the film in the way it will be to *The Touch* is nonetheless implicit, can be understood in two ways: as the loss of innocence and as the attainment of knowledge. This dual movement can be seen with *A Passion* as a dual progress from the

impersonal acts of violence directed against animals in the film to those by people against other people, and from lies and deception to truth. Thus, the dog who is hanged and the sheep who are mutilated are victims of mysterious and inexplicable acts of violence presented not so much as moral acts, but almost as acts—or facts—of nature, beyond the responsibility of the characters with whom we're concerned in the film (though they are perhaps indirectly responsible, in a symbolic rather than literal sense). But gradually, and parallel to the stripping away of the lies and deceptions with which the characters defend themselves, the human potential for violence behind the masks is revealed. The point at which the shift occurs directly follows Andreas's and Anna's crucial failure to commit themselves truly to Johan and thereby to save him. Only through love, through genuine selfless commitment beyond empty gestures, can the violence be curbed. The scene where Andreas and Anna are unable to help Johan is followed by the scene where violence apart from human agency (the bird hitting the window) and violence endowed with human agency (Vietnam on TV) most overtly overlap. All Andreas and Anna feel they can do is to put the bird out of its misery (by hitting it on the head with a stone, in anticipation, symbolically, of the stoning of Johan), to bury it, and to wash the blood (the responsibility) off their hands. From this point on, their relationship rapidly deteriorates, a deterioration manifesting itself most explicitly in an escalation of the violence between them. As the film ends, Andreas is once again alone in the frame, as at the beginning, the myth of his self-sufficiency thoroughly exposed.

Deborah Thomas

THE TOUCH (Beröringen)

(May 23)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.

U.S.A./Sweden, 1970.

Script: Ingmar Bergman.

Photography: Sven Nykvist

Music: Jan Johansson.

Leading Players: Elliott Gould (*David Kovac*), Bibi Andersson (*Karin Vergéus*), Max von Sydow, (*Dr. Andreas Vergéus*), Sheila Reid (*Sara Kovac*), Staffan Hallerstam (*Anders Vergéus*), Maria Norgard (*Agnes Vergéus*), Barbro Hiort af Ornäs (*Karin's Mother*), Åke Lindström (*Doctor*). Eastman Colour. English dialogue. Certificate X. 113 minutes.

Structurally, *The Touch* is a surprisingly uncomplicated film, a linear narrative whose interest lies almost wholly in its thematic complexity. The myth of the Fall is central to *The Touch*, as to *A Passion* before it, Eden now transformed, however, from an abstract metaphysical state to the concrete conditions of bourgeois marriage. That Karin's marriage to Andreas may be read in this way is amply supported by the evidence of the film: the first view we have of them together is in their garden; Andreas tells David, "Our garden is actually our pride," and when Karin answers David's question about whether her marriage is happy in the affirmative, he replies pointedly, "Then everything in the garden's lovely." The marriage is thus explicitly equated with a garden and one in which Karin is but another flower: the first shot in which Karin, Andreas, and David appear together in the garden is preceded by a close-up of red flowers, and Karin herself is dressed, here and for much of the film, in red. At the end of the film, after Karin has returned to her husband and tells David of her decision, they meet in a greenhouse, where the fragility and *unnaturalness* of the garden is revealed, the hothouse atmosphere and feverish coloring of the flowers exposed and acknowledged.

The morning after the dinner with David, when, having sent Andreas off to work and the children to school to the accompaniment of ironically bouncy music, Karin is left alone, the music abruptly gone, her sense of emptiness is made apparent: we see her yawn, have a cigarette and coffee, read the newspaper, and the overriding impression is of a bored, purposeless woman trying to fill up her time. From this we cut to a painting of the devil in the church, the camera moving down to Karin and David entering



through the door beneath the painting. The presentation of David as the devil in Karin's Eden is given still further emphasis by the stone carving of the snake which fascinates Karin outside the church. The overwhelming irony of the film is that David, ultimately, is as bourgeois as Andreas. He is prepared to become an associate professor at the University of Aarhus, and his final offer to Karin is of "a settled life on your conditions. You can bring the children, everything will be the way you want it. You'll have your security." So in the end, there is no real choice for Karin between Andreas and David, and she is right in asking David's sister Sarah whether it matters whose baby she is bearing. From *A Passion's* male-centeredness, Bergman has moved on, in *The Touch*, to a film centered on a woman torn between two men, but a woman not so much free to fulfil herself through her decision as caught in the illusoriness of that choice (the reason, perhaps, why Karin "hates any form of decision," as Andreas tells David). David's empty apartment when he leaves for London recalls Karin's empty house when Andreas and the children leave for work and school.

The pre-credit sequence in which Karin learns of her mother's death and confronts her corpse is crucial in two respects. First, it is a descent into death which momentarily forces Karin to question her life and to distance herself from her own entrapment, making her receptive to David's advances. In confronting her own mortality through that of her mother, Karin introduces an element of time into her life which to some extent "denaturalizes" her marriage to Andreas: thus, a situation which previously appeared both necessary and eternal is seen, through the death of her mother, to be contingent and finite, and therefore subject to change. The second respect in which the death of Karin's mother is crucial is in its highlighting of the historical dimension of ideology. Ideology, like the wedding rings Karin "inherits" from her mother, is transmitted through the family. Maria, Karin's daughter, becomes increasingly important in this context, in the course of the film, as she internalizes her mother's image and Andreas's disapproval of Karin's and David's affair. Andreas, further, was left his home by his parents, so the garden itself has its roots in the past. David is cut off from such connections with his origins, and what he seeks and finds with Karin is not so much sexual passion as maternal love, the love he has lost with his mother's death and which links him with his past. David's self-hatred quite explicitly stems from his exclusion from the family, an exclusion expressively recapitulated in his *foreignness*, his exclusion from the society—the ideology again—in which he lives. The relationship with Karin thus represents David's desperate attempt to reinstate himself in that ideology, and not to liberate Karin from it. So Bergman has come a long way, in *The Touch*, from that glorification of woman-as-mother which characterized much of her earlier work. One of the achievements of *The Touch* is that it situates woman not in nature but in the historically specific context of the modern bourgeois family.

Deborah Thomas

Supporting film:

INGMAR BERGMAN

Director: Stig Björkman.
Sweden, 1971.
Photography: Roland Lundin.
Featuring: Ingmar Bergman, Bibi Andersson,
Elliott Gould, Sven Nykvist.
Colour. 16 mm.

It was apparently the first time that Bergman had allowed himself to be interviewed in front of a camera, and the critic Stig Björkman not only got that job but was also permitted to film part of the shooting of *The Touch*, the first 'international' English-language Bergman work. If the director had a reclusive reputation up to this point, the film immediately set the record straight; one's first impression is of bustling good humour and outwardsness, an organiser who's having a terrific time with a group of friends. As he comments later, "that old amateur Dreyer wanted his unit to be a lot of dismal Jeremiahs on the set all day" in order to achieve the intensity that finally chills the screen, but Bergman insists that his team couldn't work efficiently if they were as grim as the subjects being filmed.

Instead, Björkman's documentary unveils a human dynamo, laughing his way through the process of steering his unit, his actors, and his story across the hazards of production. Only once does he lose some cool, and the prying camera is abruptly turned off while some developing difficulties with Bibi Andersson over the concept of a scene are sorted out. "She did it her way in the end," Bergman observes placidly afterwards, urbanely overlooking the obvious point that it was the way that suited him best. The interview scenes are charming, direct, and always fascinating if never, somehow, as revealing as one had hoped. Bergman's methods emerge sharply enough, but his motives—other than a general hunger for company—remain comfortably protected within a discreet and polished armour.

Philip Strick

CRIES AND WHISPERS (Viskningar Och Rop)

(May 12)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist
Music: Bach (played by Pierre Fournier) and
Chopin (played by Käbi Laretei).
Leading Players: Harriet Andersson (Agnes),
Ingrid Thulin (Karin), Liv Ullmann (Maria), Kari
Sylvan (Anna), Erland Josephson (Doctor), George
'Arin (Fredrick).
Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate X.
91 minutes.

Cries and Whispers, unlike *A Passion* whose opening and closing words are those of an impersonal male narrator, is bracketed by the words of one of the main female characters, Agnes, in her diary. She alone of the sisters narrates her own flashback, as well as the final images of the film, where her voice takes over imperceptibly from that of Anna. Links between Anna's and Agnes's consciousness, establishing their interdependence, occur quite early in the film, each woman providing the lost and longed for mother/child the other lacks. Following Anna's prayer—"to let thy angels guard my little girl whom thou in thy unfathomable wisdom tookest unto thyself. Amen."—she blows out a candle, bites into an apple, and the camera moves down to her dead child's empty cot, as Anna goes off. From the empty cot (signifying the absence of Anna's child), we cut to a shot of Agnes, her voice on the soundtrack taking us into her flashback: "Mother is in my thoughts every day, although she has been dead for twenty years." So from Anna's prayer for her dead child, we move to Agnes's memory of her dead mother, the two scenes further connected by continuing piano music from the end of Anna's prayer through the flashback.

In this connection, one may interpret the sequence of Agnes's "resurrection" as a wish-fulfilment on Anna's part (though its "reality status" is more complicated than this). The sequence is directly preceded by a shot of Anna



'Cries and Whispers'

behind the bars of her child's cot, suggesting that her wish for Agnes to revive is a deliberate response to the absence of her child. Following Karin's and Maria's rejection of their "undead" sister, Anna climbs into bed with her, cradling Agnes's head in her lap. The *pietà* pose is a striking and logical outcome of Agnes's continual identification not just with Anna's (female) child but with the (male) figure of Christ as well, an identification further fostered by her name (Agnes=lamb), her martyrdom (*cf.* the minister's words: "If it is so that you have gathered our suffering in your poor body...."), and, indeed, her resurrection itself. The minister goes on to ask Agnes to intercede with God, to *speak to him* "if it is so that you can speak the language that this God understands," and her association with and appropriation of the word, an appropriation whose justification the minister explicitly relates to her suffering, further links her with Christ. Agnes's consciousness brackets *Cries and Whispers* not merely in her appropriation of language but of the gaze as well. Even before Agnes writes the first words of the film, we see her open her eyes (coming to consciousness through vision), drink some water and walk about the room, look at her sleeping sister Maria, and only then sit down to write. The two sections of her flashback are connected by a dissolve from young Agnes in the earlier scene to young Agnes in autumn, the eyes of the former momentarily superimposed upon the eyes of the latter, and both sections involve her spying on her mother: first, "I would follow her at a distance and spy on her without really meaning to because I loved her utterly and jealously"; then, "I remember another time, it was autumn. I hid behind the curtain and watched her in secret." She alone, of the sisters and Anna, is never seen in a mirror, she alone is seen painting (a white rose). So Agnes is de-eroticized to some extent by this (partial) emphasis on what she sees rather than on how she is seen, but insofar as she is unavoidably present in the images of the film being presented and is not merely reducible to a point of view, Agnes is as trapped as her sisters within the spectators' gaze. But Bergman's presentation of the dying Agnes—eyelids reddened, lips cracked and dry, cheeks taut—is an assault upon the voyeurism of the audience, a reminder of the mortal condition of us all.

Deborah Thomas

Supporting film:

FOTO: SVEN NYKVIST

Director: Bayley Silleck.
Great Britain, 1973.
Producer: Philip Strick.
Featuring: Ingmar Bergman, Sven Nykvist, Liv
Ullmann, Erland Josephson.
Colour. 16 mm. 26 minutes.

Bayley Silleck, a fine, formal documentarist whose films, usually made for U.S. television, have covered everything from Coleridge to Dylan Thomas to David Lean, arrived on my VPS doorstep unheralded but with a unique package—some footage from Bergman's own

archives which, with the master's blessing, was available for inclusion in a tribute to Sven Nykvist, whom Bayley had also interviewed. It was fun combining our collective enthusiasms for Nykvist's work, and the end result, as it turned out, has been cheerfully well received.

The main fascination, of course, was the opportunity to glimpse Bergman constructing scenes from the *Fårö* features—the tracking shot alongside the beach in *Persona*, a hand-held sequence from *The Shame*, and some preparations for *Scenes from a Marriage*. There's a shot of a Bergman script-conference, with a whole gallery of young but recognisable faces. We were able to find the right extracts from *Through a Glass Darkly* and *Winter Light* to illustrate Nykvist's descriptions of the ways in which the scenes were conceived and shot, and there's a vivid account of the house-burning sequence from *The Shame* that had to be improvised on the spot. The Nykvist magic ("two small lamps and a sheet of paper") is affectionately praised by Liv Ullmann, but whether anyone could learn from the film how to win Oscars for cinematography I rather doubt. "Ingmar conducts all of us," observes one of the team, and although we strove to devote the film to Nykvist, for my money (almost literally in this instance) it's still dominated by Bergman himself.

Philip Strick

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE (Scener ur ett Aktenskap)

(June 6)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1973
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist
Leading Players: Liv Ullmann (*Marianne*), Erland Josephson (*Johan*), Bibi Andersson (*Katarina*), Jan Malmström (*Peter*), Anita Wall (*Interviewer*), Gunnel Lindblom (*Eva*).
Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 168 minutes.

Scenes From a Marriage is clearly styled with a popular audience in mind. Most critics have picked up on this relative stylistic "invisibility" (relative, that is, to Bergman's other work, if not to the cinema in general), without taking account, however, of the rather more complicated narrative strategies underlying the surface simplicity. If the film represents a linear progress in the relationship of Johan and Marianne (they progress from being married to being separated, divorced, and, ultimately, to being lovers married to other spouses), it is nonetheless circular and non-progressive in terms of society as a whole (throughout, we are presented with inadequate marriages whose spouses engage in clandestine extramarital affairs). If Paula is substituted for Marianne, and Marianne for Johan's forbearing wife Anna at the end of the final episode of the film, then the structure of the relationships at the end is identical to that earlier on. Growth, change, and so on are exposed as individual solutions which, in a wider social context, mean nothing. In this sense, then, the film is constructed upon a circularity of structure whose irony is pointed out.

Nonetheless a sense of "specialness" attaches to the film's main identification figures such that what happens to them appears to happen absolutely. Their points of view are not interchangeable with the equally valid points of view of other (minor) characters in the film, but, rather, provide an epistemologically privileged stance or outlook on reality. This asymmetry of the secondary characters (including those who, like Paula and the spouses of Marianne and Johan at the end, never even appear on screen) acts against the larger circularity of the film, preventing the kinds of substitutions just mentioned (Paula for Marianne, Marianne for Anna) which would reveal the larger context of social stasis within which individual growth occurs. All this is, perhaps, obvious enough, but its importance in a film centrally concerned with the ideology of the couple lies in the fact that the same notion of specialness (and the closely related concept of fidelity) is precisely what is at issue within the *content* of the film. In other words, the use of identification-figures which provides an asymmetry between primary and secondary points of view in the film parallels the sense of specialness upon which sexual relationships in our society are based.

The episode entitled "Paula" is crucial, for it is here that the central crisis of the film and of the marriage—Johan's sexual transgression—reveals itself as precisely a denial of Marianne's uniqueness. But it is in epistemological terms, and not purely sexual ones, that Marianne's special status is denied. The real betrayal consists not so much of Johan's relationship with Paula *per se* as of the ignorance of this relationship on Marianne's part, and on her part alone. Everyone knows but her. The traditional dichotomy between wife and "other woman" is founded upon a basic asymmetry of knowledge which undermines the "closed-offness" of the marriage: the "other woman" usually knows about the wife, while the wife rarely knows, initially at least, about her. When she does find out, her sense of betrayal is compounded by the other's knowledge of her and her own ignorance. More essential to bourgeois marriage even than sexual exclusivity are the values of privacy, discretion, loyalty, and so on which make of the couple a site of privileged knowledge.

The distinctness of the two forms of "specialness" dealt with above (that of the actors of the film, that of the married couple in the narrative world) is to some extent undermined, most evidently in the episode entitled "The Vale of Tears" when, as Marianne reads to Johan from her diary, a series of photographs is presented to us of Liv Ullmann/Marianne at various stages of her life. The disturbing quality of the sequence derives in part from its ambiguity: Marianne reads to herself, but the photos are of Liv Ullmann (taken long before she became an actor in Bergman's film, long before she "became" Marianne). The sequence suddenly makes manifest the illusoriness of "Marianne" just as Marianne is reading of her insecurity within the marriage. On one level, the possibility of identification with the privileged stance of "Marianne" within the film is suddenly denied us (for she is revealed as an actress). On another level, the privileged knowledge, the privacy, of marriage ("the snug little world") is revealed as hell ("a cruelty and brutality implied"). Our own insecurity as film spectators

deprived of our place in relation to the film parallels Marianne's insecurity within the narrative deprived of *her* place in relation to the marriage. The film's tremendous impact on its viewers derives largely from its ability to convey, as well as depict, the insecurity, the denial of specialness, which is its central concern.

Deborah Thomas

THE MAGIC FLUTE (Trollflöjten)

(May 26)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1974.
Script: Ingmar Bergman. Based on the opera by Mozart and Schikaneder.
Photography: Sven Nykvist
Leading Players: Josef Köstlinger (*Tamino*), Irma Urrila (*Pamina*), Kåkan Hagegård (*Papageno*), Elisabeth Eriksson (*Papagena*), Ulrik Cold (*Sarastro*).
Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate U. 132 minutes.

Bergman makes three crucial changes in Sarastro's role which establish him as a locus of the film's temporality: (1) He is made Pamina's father, thus endowing his relationship to the Queen of the Night with historical concreteness—they have a common past and are no merely metaphysical opponents. (2) Sarastro abdicates his power at the end of the film—his life is thus shown to be subject to the vicissitudes of time, to change. (3) Sarastro's despair reveals an awareness of time/mortality/death which the music itself cannot assuage—indeed, at the end of the film, Sarastro cannot even bring himself to play the magic flute. If Sarastro is given a markedly temporal dimension belying the serenity of Mozart's music, the Queen of the Night is even more immersed in time (as when she ages before Pamina's eyes, as she tells her daughter to kill Sarastro). The difference is that she more arguably already had such connotations in Mozart's original, whereas Sarastro did not. The moon is a standard metaphor for change, inconsistency, and woman, as is the serpent, which sheds its skin and renews itself; both are associated with the Queen of the Night. Simone de Beauvoir notes in *The Second Sex* that "it is also the serpent that took from man his immortality," and one can certainly read the conflict between Sarastro and the Queen of the Night in such terms. But if the realm of the Queen of the Night is death, Sarastro's realm of "pure spirit" is another kind of death, particularly as presented by Bergman. He is an anguished and vitiated Sarastro, and his abstracted tenets of wisdom and justice are obvious—and unsuccessful—attempts at sublimation of desire.

To introduce desire (which, of necessity, is oriented to future fulfilment) is to introduce time, and, indeed, recurrent motifs of both kisses and death imagery are woven throughout the film, often in bizarre juxtaposition (as when Papageno sings—surrounded by skulls and bones—"If my girl but gives me a kiss"). Sarastro's rejection of the Queen of the Night in favour of pure intellect, given a sexual dimension by Bergman's representation of them as former lovers, is a desperate attempt to deny his own mortality. The futility of this attempt is mirrored by the futility of Sarastro's abdication in favour of Tamino and Pamina. Bergman has already somewhat subverted the concept of eternal love by the (implied) break-up of Sarastro's union with the Queen of the Night. By juxtaposing Tamino's and Pamina's love duet with shots of Sarastro and the Queen looking at one another with anything but love, and then cutting to Tamino and Pamina, after their travail through fire and waves, from a quick shot of skulls, Bergman reminds us, at the very moment of Tamino's and Pamina's triumph, that love may die, and so will they. The legacy of the parents descends to their children. And so, from Mozart, we have returned to the thematic preoccupations of mainstream Bergman, in the context of which the opera's victory of light over darkness (and man over woman) can only be equivocal.

Bergman's use of the young girl in the audience is, above all, an exercise in nostalgia. Linked to the suppression of time and the unconscious implicit in the treatment of the girl and in the notion of



music's ability to lift us out of ourselves, our histories, and our progression towards death, is a longing to escape from desire to the Sarastroan realm of pure spirit, which, however, Bergman realises all too clearly is illusory, while acknowledging the force of its appeal. Through the recurrent Brechtian device of printed placards accompanying the singing of some of the most simplistically benevolent—and beautiful—of the opera's arias, Bergman distances himself and his audience from taking such sentiments too seriously. He is far too aware to succumb fully to the apparent innocence of repressed desire, and the meaning of his film lies ultimately in the cracks in its serenity, through which the death's head grins.

Deborah Thomas



FACE TO FACE (Ansikte mot Ansikte)

(June 13)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1975.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist
Music: Mozart's "Fantasy in C Minor", K475, played by Käbi Laretei.
Leading Players: Liv Ullmann (*Dr Jenny Isaksson*), Erland Josephson (*Dr Tomas Jacob*), Gunnar Björnstrand (*Grandfather*), Aino Taube-Henrikson (*Grandmother*), Kari Sylwan (*Maria*).
Eastman Colour. English version (dubbed).
Certificate X. 136 minutes.

As the film begins, there is a dissolve from a shot of water to Jenny in her empty house. Her words on the telephone to her grandmother—"Hey, Grandma, it's Jenny"—are an apparently confident assertion of her own identity which is belied by the dissolve to her from water, suggesting a fluid, dynamic reality beneath the surface stability. Jenny puts on dark glasses and looks at her watch before telephoning, all her experiences (visual, temporal, communicative) mediated by *things*, by *objects*, which anchor her in reality and make it possible to avoid confronting the emptiness behind them ("they just took out the rest of the furniture," she says to her grandmother of the empty house, "It looks so funny....."). Jenny's precarious sense of self is based on rationality (*i.e.* on the repression of others within her, herself as a child, and so on, with all of whom she must come face to face), which the film continually discredits. Even psychiatry (the rationalization of the irrational) is suspect: the book Jenny reads that night is called *Prisoners of Psychiatry*; Dr. Wankel comments on the bankruptcy of psychoanalysis and is himself a neurotic chain-smoker. The film's emphasis on material things (*e.g.* the overblown décor at Elisabeth's party and the visual emphasis on tubes and scientific instruments in the hospital where Jenny recovers) is connected to its critical presentation of the world of rational control. There is no simplistic equation, however, between objects and rationality (Elisabeth, for example, while much less subject to rational control than Jenny—much more motivated by desire—is seen in an almost hysterically heightened décor, though a "defensive" one nonetheless), nor are material objects necessarily only negative and repressive (*cf.* the flat of Jenny's grandparents, though it *does* convey an impression of frozen time). The connections are complex, but the objectification of life and lived experience, the freezing of human fluidity, is shown in

consistently negative terms.

In the early part of the film, Jenny tries to maintain a sense of her own integrity and discreteness from other people, though the film continually presents others as aspects, or mirror-images, of herself. Virtually all of the film's characters are *in extremis*, though most of them resolutely deny their anguish at the same time. It is all the more amazing, given the omnipresence of the other characters' malaise, that Jenny's own desperation is steadfastly presented in narrow personal terms.

The film is uncompromisingly bleak in its utter refusal to grant us or its characters *guarantees*: Jenny tells Tomas of how, as a child, she kissed her cousin one week and he was dead the next; Tomas himself cannot promise her that he'll be back, that she will ever see him again, despite their transient closeness; and Jenny, in turn, is unable to reassure her daughter that she will never try to kill herself in the future. In the face of such fundamental insecurity and in the face of the inevitable facts of aging and death which Jenny's grandparents embody, what does Jenny's final commitment to go on living represent? For, in spite of her therapeutic re-enactment of the particular traumas of her past, the more general "human predicament" remains an insistent presence. The film appears to maintain that all one can do, finally, is, in the words of Tomas's formula, to "be real," but insofar as reality is not the metaphysical abstraction this formula makes it appear, but is socio-politically *concrete*, such a stance has ideological implications which the film never explores.

Deborah Thomas

THE SERPENT'S EGG (Das Schlangenei)

(June 23)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
West Germany/U.S.A., 1977.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist.
Music: Rolf Wilhelm.
Leading Players: Liv Ullmann (*Manuela Rosenberg*), David Carradine (*Abel Rosenberg*), Gert Frøbe (*Inspector Bauer*), Heinz Bennent (*Hans Vergerus*), James Whitmore (*Priest*), Glynn Turman (*Monroe*).
Eastman Colour. English dialogue. Certificate X. 119 minutes.

Bergman first set down the idea for *Serpent's Egg* in 1965, but "it was hard for me to find the right key so it slipped through my fingers". If it had gone ahead, it would have followed the sullen confrontations of *The Silence* and the vicious slapstick of *Now About These Women*. Instead, its place was taken by *Persona*, with which Bergman finally crashed the reality barrier and, gazing in disbelief at the Vietnam newsreels, began to explore the probability that our lives are spent mostly inside the anguish of our own heads. Eleven years later, hounded out of Sweden by tax authorities, he was able to seize on the story of

Serpent's Egg as the exact expression of a new fury. "I realised that anyone in this country, at any time and in any way, can be attacked and vilified by a particular kind of bureaucracy which grows like a fast-spreading cancer."

His film takes up the theme by showing a society in wild confusion and dread, where lives are shattered by the arbitrary malice of unknown controllers. The setting is Berlin in 1923, where post-Versailles apathy and xenophobia, hyperinflation and political chaos provided a fertile ground for the seeds of National Socialism. Dropped into the midst of this violent, vulgar decay is Bergman's customary artist (a trapeze acrobat temporarily aground from his high wire), by the customary name of Rosenberg (as in *The Shame*), and with a customary antipathy towards the bureaucratic and the rational. Like the visitors to Timoka in *The Silence*, he finds himself marooned in a country where he doesn't speak the language, where his appetites are expensively gratified at the cost of his self-respect, and where he is ultimately in danger of being destroyed.

As the film begins, Abel discovers his brother dead in their room, a gun in his lap, his dark mouth open in a grotesque shriek of pain, the back of his head sprayed across the wall. Camera and corpse stare at each other as Abel wanders about in shock, retreating at last into the black refuge of the corridor. It's an image Bergman doesn't intend us to forget, although other bluntly observed brutalities follow, including a face being battered to a pulp, and a decapitation. The gaping suicide haunts the film, both spectator and symptom of the later bloodshed, until its broken features are aped by Abel himself, clutching in futility at the tiles of his cell. Bergman had used horrific images before, but the violence in *Serpent's Egg* was at a new pitch; similarly, the glimpsed debaucheries of *The Silence* were updated to the fashionably excessive level of the 1970s, probably to satisfy the hopes of his producers (the American half represented by De Laurentiis, no less).

Overcoming the difficulties of vocabulary that affected *The Touch*, his other English-language film, Bergman is well served by his international cast. David Carradine is uncannily suited for the Max von Sydow mould, Heinz Bennent is a superb reincarnation of Gunnar Björnstrand (who was the Dr Vergerus of *The Face*). Liv Ullmann is tremulously unchanged, and James Whitmore makes a surprise success of his cameo appearance. The period, too, is reconstructed with a stylish sense of atmosphere and design: costumes, settings and music have a seedy authenticity. Bergman spent some time in Germany between the wars and could be expected to get his facts right, not perhaps that he'd regard this as too important. But the cabaret, with its pathetic innuendoes and cheap costumes, is unavoidably reminiscent of the innumerable tiny theatres in his films through which Bergman has cast so many shadow-plays across his own melancholy. If this is Germany, it's as seen by a Swedish tourist, for whom the priests are perpetually wrapped in guilt, sheets can conceal living faces as well as dead, and the hour of the wolf, just before dawn, is still a time for the darkest confidences...

Philip Strick



APRIL

Thu. 1	Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 2	THE HOWLING (X) & LOVE AT FIRST BITE (AA) Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 3	Brecht: YOU AND ME & Shorts (A) Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA) THE HOWLING (X) & LOVE AT FIRST BITE (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 4	Bergman: NOW ABOUT THESE WOMEN (X) & THE DOVE (A) Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA)	3.00 & 4.40 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 5	Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 6	Italian Cinema: THREE BROTHERS (AA)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 7	SUPERMAN II (A) Imamura: THE PORNOGRAPHER & PIGS AND WARSHIPS (Club)	3.00 p.m. 6.30 p.m.
Thu. 8	HEAVEN'S GATE (X)	5.30 & 8.00 p.m.
Fri. 9	SUPERMAN II (A) HEAVEN'S GATE (X)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 5.30 & 8.00 p.m.
Sat. 10	Brecht: DEATH BY HANGING (X) HEAVEN'S GATE (X) SUPERMAN II (A)	3.00 p.m. 5.30 & 8.00 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 11	Imamura: INTENTIONS OF MURDER (Club) HEAVEN'S GATE (X)	2.30 p.m. 5.30 & 8.00 p.m.
Mon. 12	HEAVEN'S GATE (X)	5.30 & 8.00 p.m.
Tue. 13	HEAVEN'S GATE (X)	2.30, 5.30 & 8.00 p.m.
Wed. 14	THE LADY IN RED (X) & DEMON (X) Imamura: THE PROFOUND DESIRE OF THE GODS (Club)	2.30 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Thu. 15	Home Front: TENDER COMRADE (U) & WORLD OF PLENTY (U) Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club)	6.00 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 16	THE LADY IN RED (X) & DEMON (X) Home Front: THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER (U) & LONDON CAN TAKE IT (U) Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.00 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 17	Imamura: THE HISTORY OF POST-WAR JAPAN (Club) Home Front: GOVERNMENT GIRL (U) & WORDS FOR BATTLE (U) Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club) THE LADY IN RED (X) & DEMON (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 18	Bergman: PERSONA (X) & HOUR OF THE WOLF (X) Home Front: MRS. MINIVER (U) & Short Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club)	2.30 p.m. 6.00 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 19	Gay Cinema: WE WERE ONE MAN & A CERTAIN DESIRE (Club) Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club)	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 20	Home Front: ROSIE THE RIVETER & Short (Club) Italian Cinema: THE WOMAN WITHOUT CAMELLIAS (A) & Short	2.30 & 8.30 p.m. 6.00 p.m.
Wed. 21	ALL THAT JAZZ (X) Bergman: A PASSION (AA) & SHAME (X)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 22	Home Front: WENT THE DAY WELL? (A) & THEY ALSO SERVE (U) Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 23	ALL THAT JAZZ (X) Gay Cinema: ARMY OF LOVERS & GREETINGS FROM WASHINGTON D.C. (Club) Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 24	Films for Peace Viewing Session Gay Cinema: MAIDENS IN UNIFORM & HOME MOVIE (A) Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club) ALL THAT JAZZ (X)	10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.

Sun. 25	Gay Cinema: Lecture/discussion with Richard Dyer and short films Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 26	Gay Cinema: NIGHTHAWKS (X) & CHILDREN (AA) Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	5.45 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 27	Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 28	ALTERED STATES (X) & BLUE SUNSHINE (X) Home Front: SINCE YOU WENT AWAY (U) & WORDS AND ACTIONS (U)	2.30 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu. 29	Home Front: A CANTERBURY TALE (U) & Short Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	6.00 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 30	ALTERED STATES (X) & BLUE SUNSHINE (X) TAXI ZUM KLO (Club)	2.30 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
MAY		
Sat. 1	Brecht: LE GAI SAVOIR & BECAUSE I AM KING (Club) Gay Cinema: TAXI ZUM KLO (Club) ALTERED STATES (X) & BLUE SUNSHINE (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 2	Bergman: THE LIE & THE RITE (Club) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 3	THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 4	THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 5	RAGING BULL (X) Italian Cinema: LE AMICHE (A) Italian Cinema: L'AVVENTURA (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.00 p.m.
Thu. 6	THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 7	RAGING BULL (X) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 8	Brecht: THE LIFE STORY OF BAAL & THE CHEVIOT, THE STAG AND THE BLACK, BLACK OIL (Club) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA) RAGING BULL (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 9	Italian Cinema: LA NOTTE (X) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 10	THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 11	Gay Cinema: PINK FLAMINGOES & GLEN OR GLENDA? (Club) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 12	Gay Cinema: PINK FLAMINGOES & GLEN OR GLENDA? (Club) Bergman: CRIES AND WHISPERS (X) & Short	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu. 13	THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri. 14	Gay Cinema: PINK FLAMINGOES & GLEN OR GLENDA? (Club) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 15	Brecht: KUHLE WAMPE & HISTORY LESSONS (Club) THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (AA) Gay Cinema: PINK FLAMINGOES & GLEN OR GLENDA? (Club)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.
Sun. 16	Italian Cinema: L'ECLISSE (X) Italian Cinema: THE PASSENGER (A) Overlooked or Underrated: SWEET REVENGE (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 17	Italian Cinema: THE PASSENGER (A) Overlooked or Underrated: SWEET REVENGE (AA)	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 18	Overlooked or Underrated: SWEET REVENGE (AA) Italian Cinema: THE PASSENGER (A)	2.30 & 8.30 p.m. 6.15 p.m.
Wed. 19	OUTLAND (AA) Home Front: THE WAY TO THE STARS (U) & MILLIONS LIKE US (U) & Short	3.00 p.m. 6.30 p.m.
Thu. 20	LIGHT YEARS AWAY (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Fri. 21	OUTLAND (AA) LIGHT YEARS AWAY (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Sun. 13	Bergman: FACE TO FACE (X) Keaton: GO WEST (U) & NEIGHBORS (U) & THE PLAYHOUSE (U) Keaton: THE GENERAL (U) & THE HAUNTED HOUSE (U) & DAY DREAMS (U)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sat. 22	Brecht: HANGMEN ALSO DIE (A) LIGHT YEARS AWAY (AA) OUTLAND (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.	Mon. 14	Keaton: BATTLING BUTLER (U) & THE SCARECROW (U) & ONE WEEK (U) Keaton: STEAMBOAT BILL JNR. (U) & THE ELECTRIC HOUSE (U) & THE LOVE NEST (U)	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 23	Bergman: THE TOUCH (X) & INGMAR BERGMAN Bergman: Lecture/discussion (Free) TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA)	2.00 p.m. 5.15 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Tue. 15	Keaton: SHERLOCK JUNIOR (U) & COPS (U) & THE PALEFACE (U) & THE BLACKSMITH (U) 2.30 & 8.30 p.m. Keaton: THE NAVIGATOR (U) & THE BOAT (U) & THE FROZEN NORTH (U)	6.15 p.m.
Mon. 24	TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Wed. 16	BEING THERE (AA) Keaton: THE GENERAL (U) & THE HAUNTED HOUSE (U) & DAY DREAMS (U) Keaton: GO WEST (U) & NEIGHBORS (U) & THE PLAYHOUSE (U)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 25	TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Thu. 17	A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed. 26	SOUTHERN COMFORT (X) & STRAIGHT TIME (X) Bergman: THE MAGIC FLUTE (U)	2.00 p.m. 6.00 & 8.30 p.m.	Fri. 18	BEING THERE (AA) A GIRL FROM LORRAINE	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu. 27	TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Sat. 19	Home Front: FIRES WERE STARTED (U) & NIGHT SHIFT (U) & RATIONING IN BRITAIN (U) 3.00 p.m. A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. BEING THERE (AA) 11.00 p.m.	
Fri. 28	SOUTHERN COMFORT (X) & STRAIGHT TIME (X) TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA)	2.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Sun. 20	Bergman: THE FÄRO DOCUMENT '79 (Club) 3.00 p.m. A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	
Sat. 29	Brecht: MUTTER KRAUSENS FAHRT INS GLÜCK & THE THIRD FRONT (Club) 3.00 p.m. TRUE CONFESSIONS (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. SOUTHERN COMFORT (X) & STRAIGHT TIME (X) 11.00 p.m.		Mon. 21	A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun. 30	Italian Cinema: THE RED DESERT (X) RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Tue. 22	A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (AA)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon. 31	RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Wed. 23	BRONCO BILLY (A) & HOOPER (A) Bergman: THE SERPENT'S EGG (X)	2.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
JUNE			Thu. 24	Bergman: AUTUMN SONATA (AA) Bergman: FROM THE LIFE OF THE MARIONETTES (X)	6.15 p.m. 8.30 p.m.
Tue. 1	RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN (AA)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Fri. 25	BRONCO BILLY (A) & HOOPER (A) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m. Keaton: THREE AGES (U) & THE BUTCHER BOY (U) & THE HIGH SIGN (U) 6.15 p.m. Keaton: OUR HOSPITALITY (U) & THE GOAT (U) & MY WIFE'S RELATIONS (U) 8.30 p.m.	
Wed. 2	10 (X) Italian Cinema: LA COMMARE SECCA (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Sat. 26	Brecht: ZU NEUEN UFFERN (A) Keaton: COLLEGE (U) & CONVICT 13 (U) & THE BELLBOY (U) 3.00 p.m. Keaton: SEVEN CHANCES (U) & CONEY ISLAND (U) & THE BALLOONATIC (U) 6.15 p.m. BRONCO BILLY (A) & HOOPER (A) 8.30 p.m. 11.00 p.m.	
Thu. 3	Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Sun. 27	Home Front: PERFECT STRANGERS (A) & LISTEN TO BRITAIN (U) 3.00 p.m. Keaton: OUR HOSPITALITY (U) & THE GOAT (U) & MY WIFE'S RELATIONS (U) 6.15 p.m. Keaton: THREE AGES (U) & THE BUTCHER BOY (U) & THE HIGH SIGN (U) 8.30 p.m.	
Fri. 4	10 (X) Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.	Mon. 28	Keaton: SEVEN CHANCES (U) & CONEY ISLAND (U) & THE BALLOONATIC (U) 6.15 p.m. Keaton: COLLEGE (U) & CONVICT 13 (U) & THE BELLBOY (U) 8.30 p.m.	
Sat. 5	Brecht: THE THREEPENNY OPERA (A) 3.00 p.m. Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m. 10 (X) 11.00 p.m.		Tue. 29	Keaton: STEAMBOAT BILL JNR. (U) & THE ELECTRIC HOUSE (U) & THE LOVE NEST (U) 2.30 & 8.30 p.m. Keaton: BATTLING BUTLER (U) & THE SCARECROW (U) & ONE WEEK (U) 6.15 p.m.	
Sun. 6	Bergman: SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE (AA) 3.00 p.m. Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA) 6.15 p.m. Italian Cinema: THE OBERWALD MYSTERY (A) 8.30 p.m.		Wed. 30	CALIFORNIA DOLLS (X) Keaton: SHERLOCK JUNIOR (U) & COPS (U) & THE PALEFACE (U) & THE BLACKSMITH (U) 6.15 p.m. Keaton: THE NAVIGATOR (U) & THE BOAT (U) & THE FROZEN NORTH (U) 8.30 p.m.	
Mon. 7	Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA) 6.15 p.m. Italian Cinema: THE OBERWALD MYSTERY (A) 8.30 p.m.				
Tue. 8	Italian Cinema: THE TRAGEDY OF A RIDICULOUS MAN (AA) 2.30 & 6.15 p.m. Italian Cinema: THE OBERWALD MYSTERY (A) 8.30 p.m.				
Wed. 9	S.O.B. (AA) & THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S BALL (AA) 2.00 p.m. Italian Cinema: ZABRISKIE POINT (X) & BLOW-UP (X) 6.30 p.m.				
Thu. 10	Gay Cinema: LE TESTAMENT D'ORPHEE (A) & LOT IN SODOM (X) 6.15 p.m. TWO STAGE SISTERS (U) 8.30 p.m.				
Fri. 11	S.O.B. (AA) & THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S BALL (AA) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m. Gay Cinema: TOWN BLOODY HALL (AA) & SOME AMERICAN FEMINISTS (A) 6.00 p.m. TWO STAGE SISTERS (U) 8.30 p.m.				
Sat. 12	Brecht: THE GANGSTER SHOW (Club) & Lecture/Discussion 3.00 p.m. Gay Cinema: WITCHES & DYKES - FAGGOTS & POOFERS (Club) & IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILDREN (Club) 6.15 p.m. TWO STAGE SISTERS (U) 8.30 p.m. S.O.B. (AA) & THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S BALL (AA) 11.00 p.m.				

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All screenings will be held in the Arts Lab Cinema.
With double-bill programmes the main film (listed first) will be screened after
the support (listed second).
Club performances are only open to members and their guests. All other
performances are open to the public.

HOLT STREET BIRMINGHAM B7 4BA 021-359 2403/4192

AUTUMN SONATA (Herbstsonate/Höstsonat)

(June 24)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
West Germany, 1978.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist.
Music: "Prelude Suite" No.2 in A by Frédéric Chopin (performed by Käbi Laretei), "Suite" No.4 in E Flat by Johann Sebastian Bach (performed by Claude Genetay), "Sonata in F". Op. 1 by George Frederick Handel (performed by Franz Brügggen, Gustav Leonhardt, Anne Bylsma).
Leading Players: Ingrid Bergman (*Charlotte*), Liv Ullmann (*Eva*), Lena Nyman (*Helena*), Halvar Björk (*Viktor*), Arne Bang-Hansen (*Uncle Otto*), Funnar Björnstrand (*Paul*), Erland Josephson (*Josef*), Georg Løkkeberg (*Leonardo*).
Eastman Colour. English subtitles (Swedish and English dialogue). Certificate AA. 92 minutes.

The film begins and ends with Eva (Liv Ullmann) writing a letter. The first is to invite her mother, the world-famous concert pianist (Ingrid Bergman) to come and stay, the second is to apologise and attempt amends for a visit that went disastrously for both of them. Observing the correspondence, all of it, is Eva's husband, Viktor, a placid, undemanding parish priest who loves without requiring that he be loved in return. His vaguely *deus-ex-machina* status established by his opening address to the camera (no other character in the film acknowledges us as audience, nor is the device used again), he speaks so blatantly from the pulpit that were it not, as usual, for Bergman's uncanny skill with actors whose faces and inflections can convert the driest text into authentic confession, we would reject him smartly as a contrivance and symbol. Instead, his confidential chat has such a raw sorrow that only long afterwards, as the film begins to settle in the mind, can we observe that his vocation has been to listen, not to participate, to comfort, but not physically to assist. God-like, he is neither catalyst, nor mediator; he has, instead, his own problems. "I'd like to tell my wife," he finds the words to tell us, "just once, that she is loved wholeheartedly—but I can't find the words that would convince her."

Another Bergman piece, then, about language? Upstairs, Eva's sister Lena is slowly declining into terminal illness that renders her incapable of intelligible speech. Her mother, Charlotte, would rather not have to confront the desperate, loving eyes, the distorted mouth, but Eva has rescued Lena from a nursing home where the solicitous pianist had planted her, and now the two of them are waiting to resume the relationship that Charlotte, throughout their lives, has placed repeatedly on a domestic shelf while she meets the challenge of her art throughout the world. Now the words are to be spoken, and the mother must answer to them.

The debate takes place, of course, in the small hours, after Charlotte has been awoken by a brief nightmare of someone touching her. Building his sequence from the simplest of closeups, the plainest of light and shadow, and a series of snapshot flashbacks with minimal movement, Bergman pours out a cascade of narrative, chapter and verse for two contingent lives. Eva discards, at last, the practised restraint with which she claims to have obeyed her mother's wishes, and unleashes the bitterness of years on a horrified Charlotte. In turn, the artist defends herself, reveals her own allegiances, her own dependancies, the vulnerability she has striven to overcome through her career. As they exchange maternal guilt (for Eva, too, has been less than a success as a mother), the girl for whom they are both responsible writhes neglected in the darkness.

Were it not that Liv Ullmann has had many a fine share of this sort of tirade, it would be the opportunity of a lifetime—certainly the encounter is the stuff of which Academy Awards are made. Exacting revenge for the years spent at home while her mother jaunts around the world, she spellbindingly compensates for past silences. "When you came home, I couldn't say anything," she recalls, supported by a single, elegantly positioned flashback. "I had no words. You had taken charge of all the words in our home." And in venomous conclusion, lifted straight from the script for *The Lie*, she asserts: "People like you are

a menace—they should be locked up."

The mother flees, for which one can hardly blame her, and the spoken words give way once again to written phrases (although these too are spoken over closeups of Eva and Charlotte, who may or may not be listening). Perhaps the heart will win back the intellect, with God a benign witness, perhaps the wounds of supposed (if subjective) truth will heal, or perhaps the letter will never be sent. The conclusion is pure *Cries and Whispers*, celebrating "the enormous opportunity of getting to take care of each other". As an objective, it appears hopeful enough, but Bergman as usual prefers to leave it just out of reach. The words may bridge the gulf between the communicants, but actions form a more expressive language—and mother and children are still far apart, as they have always been. The words that might convince them, it seems, continue to await discovery.

It has its contrivances, but *Autumn Sonata* is a fine, jolting, pleading assault on the ease with which we seek to discard the inconvenient past. If it were no more, it offers two spectacular performances in the central roles—Liv Ullmann emerging with extraordinary strength from the deliberate owl naivety of the early scenes into the biting ferocity of her major outburst, Ingrid Bergman charting a whole geography of emotions across the face as beautiful and tremulous as when, thirty years ago, it confronted the pains of other recollections in *Under Capricorn*. But *Autumn Sonata* is very much more, and there may never be enough words to thank Bergman for it.

Philip Strick

FÄRÖ 1979 (Fårö—Dokument 1979)

(June 20)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
Sweden, 1979.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Arne Carlsson.
Music: Svante Petterson, Sigvard Hultdt, Dag and Lena, Ingmar Nordströms, Stix Q, Rock de Luxe, Ola and the Janglers.
Featuring: Richard Ostman, Ulla Silvergren, Annelie Nyström, Per Broman, Irene Broman, Inge Nordström, Annika Liljegren, Arne Eriksson, Victoria Ekström, Anton Ekström.
Colour. English subtitles. 103 minutes. 16 mm.

In 1969, some 700 people lived on the bleak, spare island of Fårö in the Baltic just north of Gotland. One of them, Ingmar Bergman, used the island as a setting for his films, its influence on character, outlook and design proving to be so vital that at last he gave the place its starring role in *Fårö 1969*, an affectionate home-movie about the location and its inhabitants, a collage of interviews, encounters, and reflections. Ten years later, 673 people live on Fårö, and Bergman returns for a progress report, a documentary covering the span of their existence from one winter to the next. He devotes special attention to Richard Ostman, who began writing poetry quite suddenly in his seventies; to Walter Broman, who helps out with the farming chores but lives in placid solitude; to Ingrid Ekman, jolly conversationalist from the 1969 film, now in rueful decline; and to the Ekström family whose grandparent dies towards the end of the year.

There are also brief interviews with the young people who, still at school ten years ago, are now pursuing their careers with varying success, and fresh comments from children in the school bus of today. Bergman conducts the interviews himself (off-camera), and he occasionally comments over sequences indicating the change of the seasons: the spring service of thanksgiving, the sheepshearing, the summer invasion by 112,000 buses and cars, the harvest, a thatching party using local marsh reeds under specialist guidance, the slaughter of a pig for winter, the excursions of the fishing fleet. Given Fårö's special significance in his affections, Bergman makes an admirably detached reporter, and much of the island speaks for itself, photographed not by Nykvist but in colours which one has to admit are equally loving and attentive through the lens of Arne Carlsson: the constant changes of sea and sky, the drifts of light snow over trees and barns, the reflections of stone walls and cattle, the uncluttered pastures.

The people, too, need little prompting: from the

lighthouse-keeper staunchly resisting computerisation to the schoolteacher describing his campaign to secure, little by little, all the school equipment he needs from a distant and uncaring educational authority, the Fårö community expresses itself with assurance and a certain rugged pride. The local thatching expert makes the most of his role as instructor and humorist, while the reminiscences of the diabetic farmer, delicately assembling a magnificent fish dinner to eat alone, are eloquent as much for their silences as for their sporadic phrasing.

One senses that the islanders would be less open to a more casual interviewer; the ill-fated Ekström couple, for example, shutting the questions like unwelcome parcels from husband to wife and back, bear the fixed apologetic smiles of those who suspect they deserve their catalogue of hardships and would prefer the pages turned in privacy. It's from them, however, that Bergman is able to draw the key image for his film: the gently halted shot of the old man reaching out to touch the foot of a tiny baby is followed by the serene formality of the funeral in a snow-bound cemetery, with a poem over the coffin ("We are all like leaves on the ground...") and the mourners nodding their respects. The ritual, with its inevitability and its assurances, transcends the agnostic Bergman of less acquiescent moods.

Elsewhere, he's on form by dwelling with grisly relish on the slaughter, draining and dissection of a pig, a resonance of macabre realism echoing the mood of *Serpent's Egg*. But Fårö in general, while evidently no paradise, does seem placid enough to inspire a truce in Bergman's customary arena of violence and theological dispute. At the end, after a trawler voyage added a little awkwardly as if there were nowhere else to put it, he cheerfully chips in with a brisk summary of Fårö's prospects, a schoolmaster giving an encouraging grade. "Our next visit will be in 1989," he promises. And then adds, as only Bergman could, "It will be interesting to see if we're still alive."

Philip Strick

FROM THE LIFE OF THE MARIONETTES (Aus dem Leben der Marionetten)

(June 24)

Director: Ingmar Bergman.
West Germany, 1980.
Script: Ingmar Bergman.
Photography: Sven Nykvist.
Music: Rolf Wilhelm.
Leading players: Robert Atzorn (*Peter Egermann*), Christine Buchegger (*Katarina Egermann*), Martin Benrath (*Professor Mogens Jensen*), Rita Russek (*Katarina Krafft known as Ka*), Lola Muthel (*Cordelia Egermann*), Walter Schmidinger (*Tomas Isidor Mandelbaum, known as Tim*), Heinz Bennent (*Arthur Brenner*).
Eastman Colour. German dialogue/English subtitles. Certificate X. 104 minutes.

Peter Egermann, a young German business executive of impeccable background, visits the seedy premises where a prostitute, Katarina Krafft, entertains her customers. When the other guests have departed and the doorman, by arrangement, has locked them in, he becomes agitated, attacks the girl and strangles her. Later he phones his psychiatrist, summons him to the scene of the crime, and reports that he has had anal intercourse with the girl's corpse...

Bergman's case histories have seldom been inclined to avert their gaze from horrific truths, but it seems a particular irony that while the violence of *Virgin Spring* and the sexuality of *The Silence* hit the headlines when the films first appeared, scarcely an eyebrow seems to have been raised over the perversely forthright truths of *Marionettes*. The environment which, twenty years ago, the Censor would have wished to excise from its inhabitants, has now become so familiar, its accusing stare so habitual (like that of the unavoidable suicide in *Serpent's Egg*) that Bergman's fundamentalist view of human nature seems to have become cancerous reality monstrously outgrowing any of the more modest extremes he has considered in the past. Today he observes a world in which he can safely assume we all share, with muted, dry-eyed repulsion.....

Philip Strick

SHOHEI IMAMURA

With Japanese films becoming increasingly difficult to see in Britain, we are particularly pleased to be able to present in this programme a representative selection of work by Shohei Imamura, who was recently the subject of a retrospective season at the National Film Theatre in London. Five of Imamura's films will be shown at the Lab during April, and this rare opportunity to see some of the most powerfully imaginative and stimulating works of recent Japanese cinema is not to be missed. Perhaps fellow Japanese director Shuji Terayama best summed up the challenge posed by Imamura's films when he said: "Nobody understands what is real and what is fantasy. Imamura's crime for the Japanese critics and pundits is that he mixes the two indistinguishably."

(We would like to thank Ian Christie of the B.F.I.'s Distribution Division for arranging print availability for this season, and Paul Willemen for providing the following documentation.)

SHOHEI IMAMURA: BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY

Extracts from an article by Alan Poul, published in the Japan Society Newsletter, Sept. 1979.

To students of Japanese cinema, or cinema in general, the discovery of Shohei Imamura invariably comes as a surprise. Acquaintance with the films of Ichikawa, or even Oshima and Shinoda, does nothing to prepare one for the raw vitality of an Imamura film, or for the Japan it presents in its images. Imamura's presence alone adds a good deal of breath to the spectrum of Japanese cinema, and yet he is nearly unknown in the West....

Imamura stands alone between the 'postwar' generation of directors like Kurosawa and Ichikawa whose films won acclaim at European festivals in the 1950s, and the 'new wave' generation including Oshima, Shinoda and Hani, who drew attention in the 1960s with their noisy rebellion against studio traditions. Like Oshima and Shinoda, Imamura began at Shochiku during the era when Ozu's style held sway, and later reacted against that refined spirit (Imamura in fact assisted Ozu on three films, including *Tokyo Story*). By the time Oshima and Shinoda began their rebellious-youth films of the early 1960s, Imamura was already producing mature works at Nikkatsu, where he moved in the mid-1950s.

Imamura has often been referred to as the 'cultural anthropologist' of Japanese film because of his rather clinical detachment from his protagonists, and because of the meticulousness of his research. In preparing each film, he conducts numerous interviews and field expeditions and his shooting is done almost entirely in real locations rather than artificial studio settings. The Japanese title of *The Pornographer* (*Introduction to Anthropology*) and *The Insect Woman* (*Chronicle of a Japanese Insect*) would seem to reinforce the image of Imamura as scientist. But Imamura's films are actually among the most eccentric, dramatic and uncompromising of all Japanese films, often arguing directly against a rational, 'scientific' approach to their subject matter. To focus on the 'anthropologist' in Imamura is to slight the artist, and few filmmakers have communicated a personal vision as con-

sistently special and compelling as his. An Imamura film is always as unmistakable as it is unforgettable.

'I want to make messy films', Imamura has said. His films are both sprawling and episodic and are frequently concerned with the lowest, least appealing elements of Japanese society. Superficially, the films' structure mirrors the disorder that beset his downtrodden characters' lives, but the closer one studies them the more they reveal a consistency of internal dramatic structure matching that of any classic 'well-made' film. Through both his choice of subjects and his manner of filming them, Imamura consistently explores the same motif — the motion of the Japanese as a race of people whose vitality, individualism, and key instincts for survival are rooted in a primitive culture that pre-dates not only the advent of the 'rational' Western influence, but also the rigid formalization of the arts imposed by the urban feudal society....

Imamura's protagonists are unsophisticated, with little knowledge of and little interest in a world outside their immediate surroundings. When young Nianchan in *My Second Brother* runs away to Tokyo, he really has no conception of the place he is running to. Sadako, the heroine of *Intentions of Murder*, lives in a spiritual isolation so complete that when she is raped by a stranger, her immediate response is that she must die.

But she does not. The hallmark of Imamura's protagonists, particularly the women, is that they are survivors. Through instinct, through will-power, through sheer selfish ruthlessness, they manage to overcome the obstacles society heaps upon them. 'My heroines are true to life', insists the director. 'Self-sacrificing women like the heroines of Naruse and Mizoguchi don't exist.' When Kinta, the young male protagonist of *Pigs and Warships*, dies a senseless death, his girlfriend Haruko calls him a fool and leaves for Kawasaki to find a factory job. The world offers precious little pity to Imamura's characters, but he sees to it that they get by without it.

Imamura's obsession with the primitive roots of the Japanese character reveals itself most clearly in his attitude toward sex, which plays a crucial role in all of his films (except *My Second Brother*, whose main character is ten years old). His characters indulge in sex freely and without guilt, and their degree of spiritual liberation is invariably seen in terms of their sexuality. Ogata, the hero of *The Pornographer* states, 'People's only joys in life are food and sex. When you can't do the latter any more, you're finished', and indeed his own impotence at the end of the film literally isolates him from humanity and leaves him adrift at sea. On the other hand, Sadako in *Intentions of Murder* ultimately finds sexual liberation through her own rape, and uses her new-found sense of identity to emerge victorious over the patriarchal tyranny of her husband's family.

Sexual taboos, particularly those concerning incest, mean little or nothing to these characters. In fact, incest is rife in Imamura. Whether the incestuous relationships occur in the primitive isolated settings of *The Insect Woman* and *The Profound Desire of the Gods* or in the Osaka slum of *The Pornographer*, they are never presented as indicative of any moral or

psychological flaws in the characters. Incest in Imamura's films is an allusion to the purity of behaviour found in the ancient Japanese myths — myths from a time when the Japanese were indeed one extended family that traced its lineage back to the brother-and-sister gods Izangi and Izanami...."

IMAMURA/FEMINISM A note by Paul Willemen

In the USA, and particularly in the book *The Waves at Genji's Door* (New York, 1976) by Joan Mellen, Imamura has been hailed as a champion of 'strong women'. This theme has been repeated by European critics, presumably grateful to Ms Mellen for removing some of the anxiety or guilt that might otherwise be provoked when watching women in Imamura's films. However, Ms Mellen's readings are based on rather idiosyncratic interpretations of the plot, neglecting any analysis of how these films function within the context of Japanese culture and society, how the films themselves work as machines for producing meaning in which all the parts, including the ways images and sounds are organised, hang together in an inextricable whole. Although the comments of the director do not necessarily carry more weight than those of any other 'reader' of a film, Imamura's remarks about the way he sees women functioning in both his films and in Japanese society in general, are of some interest in that they provide a totally different perspective:

"In the post-war period, women tried to understand how and by whom they were being oppressed. They began to have a sense of self. People said women were becoming strong. But I felt this was not really true and, therefore, women who were very ignorant and unthinking became my main characters. Of course, they had a certain strength in their ignorance. There is something in the Japanese past, the Japanese way of thinking about the gods, that is a form of primitive worship of women. Women bear children and bring them up and are therefore seen as having a sacred quality. In a very primitive way, women are worshipped in the same way that nature might be: rain falls, the sun shines and things grow. They still are.

"[...] The girl in *Pigs and Warships* is my vision of the ideal woman: she must be strong, wilful, full of vitality and drawn to weaker men—such as I. But in this film, she isn't sexually submissive to her lover because the couple is still very young, contrary to *Intentions of Murder*. At any rate, I think that Japanese women only seem to have changed since the war, superficially, but in fact they have remained the same as before. At least, the great majority of them has. Besides, the same is true for the men!"

As for the ambivalence that seems to characterize Imamura's way of portraying the central protagonists in his films, the Japanese critic Koichi Yamada wrote: "His characters are obsessed by the idea of escape.... They want to escape from their wife, their daily routine, their cowardice, their conditions of life. But there is no escape, and they get ever deeper entangled in the very desires they wish to overcome. Those 'pigs' aspire to becoming gods. Hence Imamura's laughter, both an affirmation and a rejection. Hence also the confusion and the complicity that pervades his films."

人類学入門

映倫

Born in Tokyo, September 15, 1932. Graduated in Western History from Waseda University, and then entered the Shochiku Company, initially as assistant to Yasujiro Ozu. He went on to assist the directors Yoshitaro Nomura, Yuzo Kawashima and Masaki Kobayashi, and wrote scripts for Kawashima and Kiro Urayama. He moved to the Nikkatsu Company in the mid-1950s, and began his career as director for the company in 1958. He founded his own independent production company in 1966, and has produced most of his own subsequent films.

Filmography:

- 1958: **NUSUMARETA YOKUJO** (Stolen Desire)
 1958: **NISHI GINZA EKI-MAE** (Nishi Ginza Station)
 1958: **HATESHI NAKI YOKUBO** (Endless Desire)
 1959: **NIANCHAN** (My Second Brother)
 1961: **BUTA TO GUNKAN** (Pigs and Warships)
 1963: **NIPPON KONCHUKI** (The Insect Woman)
 1964: **AKAI SATSUI** (Intentions of Murder)
 1966: **JINRUIGAKU NYUMON** (The Pornographer)
 1967: **NINGEN JOHATSU** (A Man Vanishes)
 1968: **KAMIGAMI NO FUKAKI YOKUBU** (The Profound Desire of the Gods)
 1970: **NIPPON SENGU SHI: MADAMU OM-BORO NO SEIKATSU** (The History of Post-war Japan as told by a Bar Hostess)
 1975: **KARAYUKI-SAN** (The Making of a Prostitute)
 1979: **FUKUSHU SURUWA WARENI ARI** (Vengeance is Mine)
 1981: **EIJANAIIKA**

PIGS AND WARSHIPS (Buta to Gunkan)

(April 7)

Director: Shohei Imamura.
 Japan, 1961.
 Script: Hisashi Yamauchi.
 Photography: Shinsaku Himeda.
 Music: Toshiro Mayuzumi.
 Leading Players: Hiroyuki Nagato, Jitsuko Yoshimura, Yoko Minamida, Shiro Osaka, Sanae Nakahara.
 Black and white/Scope. English subtitles.
 Uncertified. 100 minutes.

"A brilliant protest against the continuing American military occupation of Japan... Its hero, a youth named Kinta, has his life destroyed within the semi-gangster milieu spawned by the American base at Yokosuka. Kinta and his fellow would-be mobsters live off the black market graft nurtured by the base and, in symbolism that never suffers for its obviousness, raise hogs to be fed on the garbage of the American base, just as the Japanese have been force-fed the garbage of American culture since the war.

"The Americans are, of course, the 'pigs' of the title, for they truly behave like pigs towards the Japanese men and women in this film. But the pigs are also these Japanese *yakuza* themselves, since not only do the Americans abuse them and treat them as something less than human beings, but they themselves have been tempted by the greed and the example set by the occupiers. If the Americans are amoral, their petty *yakuza* imitators who would live off the leavings of their profligate wealth are equally so.

"With much more subtlety than Kobayashi, Imamura mourns the weakening of Japanese culture by its miscegenation with American values, the inevitable result of the American presence in Japan. On Kinta's jacket—in English—is written 'Japan'. When he says 'I love you' to his girlfriend Haru, it is also in English, as if his deepest self has been penetrated and distorted by the American succubus. In many of the shot compositions in the background, overshadowing the lives of Kinta and Haru, Imamura presents gargantuan images of the bay full of American ships. They express the temptation of ill-gotten wealth tantalising boys like Kinta, and to be achieved only through symbiotic ill-doings with the Americans.

"Imamura sometimes presents his own point of view through the character of Haru (Jitsuko

Yoshimura). Constantly she urges Kinta to free himself from the corrupt black market environment spawned by the Americans at Yokosuka and become a blue-collar worker at a factory in Kawasaki. She even threatens to 'play around with the G.I.'s' if he doesn't agree to the move. But the temptations presented by the Americans are too strong for directionless youths like Kinta to resist. For these temptations and the materialistic values brought to Japan by the American army have permeated Japanese culture down to the education system. Japanese children are indoctrinated into believing that Western culture is superior to theirs. Imamura has Haru's nephew study a post-war schoolbook from which he reads aloud: 'The reason Japan developed so fast was that it adopted Western culture so effectively', a view prevalent among Cold-War-oriented American academics in Japanese studies, the 'modernization' school, and accepted in Japan by Japanese eager to curry favour with the powerful.

"Imamura's feeling is that the contribution of American culture to Japanese life is summed up by Yokosuka and its environs. At the end of *Pigs and Warships* Kinta is to die a tragi-comic death amidst a herd of hogs running free. Haru, however, despite the temptations offered by the big new American battleship arriving at the port and stimulating a crowd of women to come and say 'hello' to the Yankees, wipes off her lipstick and leaves for Kawasaki, where she and Kinta were to have begun their new life together..."

Extracts from *The Waves at Genji's Door* (New York, 1976) by Joan Mellen

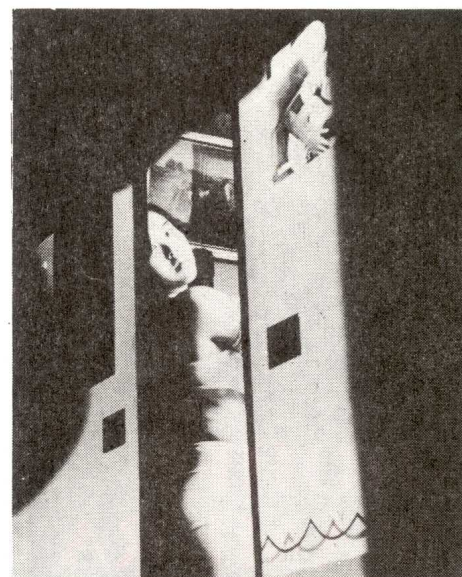
Note: This film was Imamura's main contribution to the massive campaign of protest to try and prevent the renewal of the 'security treaty' between the USA and Japan, a period of intense popular struggle graphically portrayed in Nagisa Oshima's film *Night and Fog in Japan*.

THE PORNOGRAPHER (Jinruigaku Nyumon)

(April 7)

Director: Shohei Imamura.
 Japan, 1966.
 Script: Shohei Imamura, Koji Numata; from an original story by Akiyuki Nosaka (*Erogoto-shi*).
 Photography: Shinsaku Himeda.
 Music: Toshiro Mayuzumi.
 Leading Players: Shoichi Ozawa, Sumiko Sakamoto, Keiko Sagawa, Masaomi Kondo, Ichiro Sugai.
 Black and white/Scope. English subtitles.
 Certificate X. 128 minutes.

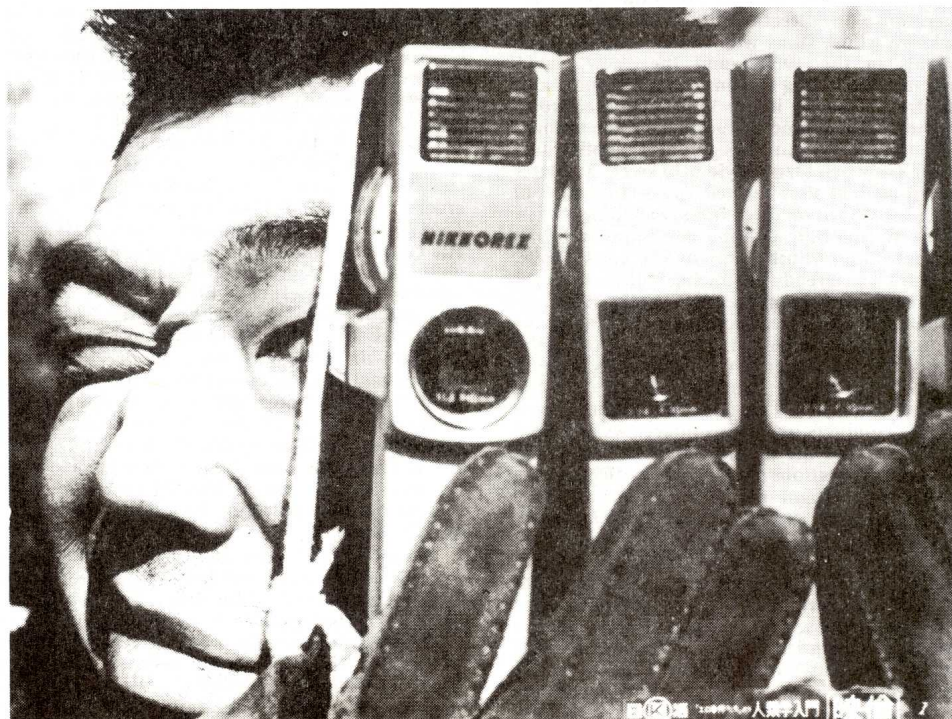
"Imamura's 1966 film based on Akiyuki Nosaka's prize-winning novel *The Pornographers*, his first



with his own independent production company, bears the title *Introduction to Anthropology*, and it duly encapsulates many of the threads that the film-maker finds to be immutable in Japanese civilization. Again set in the sleazier parts of Osaka and played in rich dialect, the story follows an 8 mm. pornographic film-maker's search for meaning in life. The widow whom Subuyan (Shoichi Ozawa, for whom Imamura wrote the script) loves refuses to marry him out of what appears to be blind loyalty because her husband asked her on his deathbed to keep his name. But superstition plays a strong role in her loyalty: every time she does something bad, the carp born when her husband died splashes in its tank, and one day an itinerant priest tells her that her husband's soul cannot rest because of her. She has a slight heart attack at the news, but while the carp splashes she seeks comforts in sex with Subuyan.

"He in turn, much as he loves the widow, is drawn to her teenage daughter, who allows him to buy kisses from her. The incest theme comes into the open when the widow, who has also allowed her 19-year-old son to fondle her in bed, realizes she will soon die and asked Subuyan to marry her daughter and take over the running of the beauty shop with her. Incest appears even in a movie-within-the-movie sequence when the pornographers are filming a rape scene. The uncooperative actress turns out to be the middle-aged 'rapist's' own retarded daughter, genuinely frightened because she doesn't recognise the man she usually makes love with.

"Subuyan is rejected by his mistress's daughter, however, and having concluded that life is only beautiful as long as it remains erotic, he sets about building himself a model in the image of the dead widow to cure his impotence. Explaining why he has come to hate real women, he gives the cold-hearted daughter as an example: 'They blame



other people for everything, but they're actually greedy, lying lechers.' In this statement Subuyan shows the reverse of what Imamura, who admitted to recognising his own lecherous tendencies in the course of making the film, appreciates in the Japanese woman. She is motivated equally strongly and without any internal feelings of contradiction by a deep concern for the legal forms of lineage that protect her rights and self-esteem through property and children, by a proto-religious superstition that a super-human order controls at least part of her life, and by her untrammelled appetites. The interplay of these motivations makes her humorous, awesome and attractive to Imamura, and his goal has been 'to portray the unsounded depths of woman by peering at her in unguarded moments like a voyeur.'"

Extract from *Japanese Film Directors* (New York/Tokyo, 1978) by Audie Bock.

INTENTIONS OF MURDER (Akai Satsui)

(April 11)

Director: Shohei Imamura.

Japan, 1964.

Script: Kenji Hasebe, Shohei Imamura; from an original story by Shinji Fujiware.

Photography: Shinsaku Himeda.

Music: Toshiro Mayuzumi.

Leading Players: Masumi Harukawa, Shigeru Tsuyuguchi, Ko Nishimura, Yoshi Kusunoki.

Black and white/Scope. English subtitles. Uncertified. 150 minutes.

In his book *Japanese Film Directors*, Audie Bock wrote of Imamura's film:

"The image of the heroine he sought for *Intentions of Murder* fits all of the women of his mature work: 'Medium height and weight, light colouring, smooth skin. The face of a woman who loves men. Maternal. A lukewarm feeling. Good genitals. Juicy.' Neither conventional beauty nor a model's slenderness is part of the ideal.

"Sadako is overwhelmingly ordinary. Barely competent as a housewife—when seeing her husband off on a business trip she brings an undershirt instead of the dress shirt he asked for—she spends a great deal of her time watching television, much to her stingy husband's annoyance. Her reaction to being raped is that she must commit suicide, but before she can face taking her life she devours a huge meal.

"Her suicide is also prevented by the desire to see her beloved six-year-old son one last time. This deformed child represents another of Imamura's recurrent themes, already broached in *The Insect Woman* and further developed in *The Profound Desire of the Gods*. Although Sadako herself does not know it, she is the granddaughter of her husband's family patriarch's mistress. She and her husband are thus of the same blood, and their child the product of an inadvertent incestuous union, very much part of Japanese culture in Imamura's view.

"Raised as a maid in her husband's household, Sadako's main concern is to attain the security of having her son entered in the family register as her husband's child rather than as his grandparents', a procedure which has not taken place because of her lowly status and her husband's powerlessness as a second son. It is the threat to her potential security that makes her decide to murder the rapist who falls in love with her, gets her pregnant and begs her to run away with him. Her slow, stolid intuition emerges victorious at the end. Their escape train to Tokyo is caught in snowdrifts, and her lover dies of a heart attack when Sadako cannot bring herself to let him drink the poisoned tea she has prepared. She simply denies that she is the woman in the photographs taken by her husband's jealous mistress, who is hit by a car and killed while snapping Sadako collapsing from the pain of a miscarriage. Sadako goes to family court to have her son's registration changed, and pretending she 'didn't know it would cause such trouble', attains a legal wife and mother's rights. The last scene shows her tending her own silkworms, dreamily enticing one along her skin with a mulberry leaf just as she did as a lascivious adolescent. Sadako has had her cake and eaten it too, and the dangers of the whole affair have stimulated her to act toward the ensuring of her security...."

About the notion that Sadako represents a 'strong women', Imamura commented: "I tried to render Sadako's constant hesitation between her feelings as 'mother of a family', her attachment to a family that isn't hers, and her irrational, physical relationship with the man who raped her. In that sense, the scene in the tramway is very explicit: it expresses above all the fact that Sadako always returns to the family at precisely those moments when she has an opportunity to free herself and to escape. She never manages to seize the chance, the moment, and her life will remain the same."

THE PROFOUND DESIRE OF THE GODS (Kamigami no Fukaki Yokubo)

(April 14)

Director: Shohei Imamura.

Japan, 1968.

Script: Shohei Imamura, Keiji Hasebe.

Photography: Maso Tochizawa.

Music: Toshiro Mayuzumi.

Leading Players: Rentaro Mikuni, Choichiro Kawarazaki, Kazuo Kitamura, Hideko Okiyama, Yasuko Matsui.

Colour/Scope. English subtitles. Uncertified. 175 minutes.

"Imamura's 1968 film, also known as *Kuragejima: Tales from a Southern Island*, arose from the impulse to document the confrontation between a waning primitive culture and the goals and mores of modern civilization, and it remains his most visually striking film. Filmed in colour and 'scope entirely in the southern Ryukyu Islands, this 2-hour-55-minute film has been called 'an at times uneasy but always fascinating combination of documentary, epic, melodrama, and philosophical dissertation.' Playing once more with illusion and reality, Imamura goes back to the myths of the founding of human society in the Ryukyus—one of the likely sources of the Japanese people—and shows how the primitive beliefs survive, even beneath the veneer of modernization.

"The original source for the film was in fact the 1962 play *Paraji*, which presented superstition as part of the satisfaction of a need to feel at home in modern, compartmentalized, industrialized society. The installation of shrines in mammoth apartment complexes around Osaka at that time corresponds to the appeasement of that ineffable discomfort a builder would feel if he did not carry out the Shinto ground-breaking ceremony on a lucky day. Modern civilization may hide these inalienable beliefs, but the blindness of the Tokyo engineer to the dancing figure of Toriko, the shamaness on the train tracks at the end of *The Profound Desire of the Gods*, is merely a temporary lapse. The reality of Japanese myth, superstition and closeness to nature will always find expression eventually, for this is the feeling of being at home.

"In the film, the myths are interwoven with the actuality of modern civilization's encroachment on the island. Nekichi (Rentaro Mikuni), like Terauchi in Oshima's 1971 *The Ceremony*, is the son of his own grandfather, and is in love with his own sister, Uma (Yasuko Matsui), the local shamaness. He has been a soldier and has learned to use dynamite and guns. His employment of these devices incurs the wrath of the community, who fear the vengeance of the gods, for they believe that all must be returned to nature. Twenty years earlier in Nekichi's field a huge phallic stone stood up. The reason for the anger the gods so expressed was deemed to be Nekichi himself, who had just returned from the war and had a strange relationship with his sister. His punishment was to dig a hole into which the boulder could fall. This he has been doing for 20 years. His sister is imprisoned at the spring and his son ostracized. Though incest is part of the myth and the reality of Kuragejima life, it is nevertheless taboo, and placation of the gods, return to harmony with nature is in order. This nature constantly makes itself felt through cut-away close-ups of snakes, ants, a pig falling into the clutches of a shark at sea, and a thunderous cicada song on the soundtrack.

"Into this scene comes the Tokyo engineer (Kazuo Kitamura) to survey how irrigation of sugar cane fields can be effected. He is duly received as a god from over the sea—Imamura points out the similarity in the Japanese women's

welcome of the American ships at the end of *Pigs and Warships*—to be placed and incorporated. With Nekichi's son Kametaro (Choichiro Kawarazaki) as his guide, he learns the local people will work for nothing, but the sacred spring may not be used. The engineer is given a local girl, Kametaro's crazy sister Toriko (Hideko Okiyama), whom he finally accepts. Gradually he forgets time and responsibility, participating in the island life and festivals, but he is recalled to Tokyo.

"Nekichi succeeds at last in felling the stone, though Ryugen (Yoshi Kato), the old man who ordered Nekichi and Uma's punishment and separation, commands him to stop when the end is in sight. Ryugen dies making love to Uma, and Nekichi, vindicated, decides to go to a new island with his sister and begin a new life, like the gods of old. Angry islanders, including Kametaro, believing Nekichi murdered Ryugen, pursue them wearing ferocious masks. In a horrifying but beautiful chase, the uncomprehending Nekichi is beaten and dragged from his boat as the sharks wait. Uma, who has betrayed her status as shamaness, is tied to the mast and set adrift. The avengers mask themselves again and pick up their paddles in the stillness of sunset.

"Five years later all in the family are dead, except Kametaro, who realizes his dream of escape and goes to Tokyo. Rumour has it that Toriko, who replaced Uma as shamaness, has become a rock and still waits for the return of the engineer. Kametaro returns from Tokyo, a 'scattered place where you are not yourself', and drives the new steam engine. The engineer and his family come to the island, where the old man who sings the song of the myth of the founding now accepts ten yen coins for his tunes. Kametaro slams on the brakes to keep from hitting Toriko, dancing happily on the train tracks, but no one else can see her.

"'Primitive culture is very weak in the face of modern civilization', says Imamura, and his film, with the apparent triumph of industrial society over the dreamy way of life of the natives of Kuragejima, shows the inferiority the primitive experiences in confronting technology. Kametaro, the transitional character who leaves the island, personified this inferiority complex. On the other hand, escape is also the dream of Nekichi and Uma, who are subjected to the sanctions of the primitive culture itself. 'There is good and bad on both sides', says Imamura, 'but', and as in Shinoda's views, echoes of Waseda University studies in classic Japanese theatre are audible here, 'I happen to be more interested in the Japan that flourished before the artistic decadence fostered by political isolation in the feudal period.' The energy, in other words, lies in the primitive forms, and so it is that Imamura seeks out the places and people least molded into a rigid modernity—the southern islanders and the female escapees from the frozen north. His deepest character studies are the lower-class provincial women who embody the intuition, superstition and surviving primitivism of original Japaneseness."

Extracts from *Japanese Film Directors* by Audie Bock (1978)

THE HISTORY OF POST-WAR JAPAN AS TOLD BY A BAR HOSTESS (Nippon Sengo Shi: Madamu Omboro no Seikatsu)

(April 17)

Director: Shohei Imamura.

Japan, 1970.

Photography: Masao Tochizawa.

Music: Harumi Ibe.

Interviewer: Shohei Imamura.

Featuring: Emiko Akaza, Etsuko Akaza, Akemi Akaza, Chieko Akaza.

Black and white. English subtitles. Uncertified. 105 minutes.

"One of the most powerful and brilliant films dealing with the effects of the Second World War and its aftermath would not be made until 1970. This was Shohei Imamura's *History of Postwar Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess*. Using the documentary approach of the *cinéma vérité* interview, the film consists of Imamura himself questioning an actual bar hostess, named Etsuko Akaza, who had bought the 'Onboro' bar in

Yokosuka, the setting as well of *Pigs and Warships*. While 'Madame Onboro' traces the history of her life from the end of the war to the present, Imamura intercuts actual newsreel footage of the tumultuous political events of the postwar period beginning with the arrival of General MacArthur in 1945.

"Sometimes the newsreels ironically contradict what Mme. Onboro tells us. At other times, Mme. Onboro's suffering after the war makes her an effective critic of the postwar period and the newsreels confirm her point of view. The energy and vitality of Etsuko Akaza, directed as they are solely to her own struggle for survival, correspond to the enormous outpouring of protest in the mass demonstrations occurring in these years from 1945 to 1970. In a way, the resilient Etsuko becomes a symbol of the strength and energy of the Japanese people after the war as they sought at last to have a hand in shaping their society.

"By the end of the film Etsuko has become a representative of 'Japan', and her attitudes express how Japan has coped with the Occupation and its aftermath as both victim and willing participant in its own victimization. In the real-life conclusion, Mme. Onboro journeys to America where she will marry a sailor half her age. But if Mme. Onboro chooses to build a life with one of those who have been the engineers of her country's subjugation, her choice is the result of Japanese intolerance toward members of the outcast group, the *Eta* or *burakumin*, to which she belongs. As a victim of Japanese racism, she has suffered more from her own people than from her contact with the Americans.

"Sometimes Imamura himself appears in a shot, as at the beginning when he invites Etsuko to take part in the film. Often we hear his voice. But even in so strongly political a film, Imamura refuses to urge his own judgments upon us, either to praise or to blame Mme. Onboro. The ironies are all expressed cinematically, entirely through the juxtaposition of the documentary materials with the commentary provided by his character.

"Although she was a member of an oppressed group, the political struggles of the postwar years did not interest Etsuko at all. Her indifference was typically that of so many Japanese, who have assimilated a Buddhist sense that there is nothing one can do about the injustice of this world. A relative had become a Communist, but during the May Day demonstrations of 1952 she herself had spent the afternoon in Shinjuku seeing *Gone with the Wind*. Meanwhile, the newsreels show us huge crowds chanting 'give us rice' and marching to the Diet, only to be stopped by the police and an order of General MacArthur. Imamura had effectively marked the date of the turning point of the Occupation toward reinstatement of the *zaibatsu* and a 'police reserve' ('it is an army, but only to protect peace') with a shot of MacArthur's famous written edict of January 31, 1947, forbidding the general strike scheduled for the next day.

"Newsreels of the Red Purges inform us, in titles, of twenty-four cabinet ministers and 10,000 government workers having been dismissed. These events, Imamura reveals, coincide with American bombings in Korea. Another title reads 'gold', and we see people panning for gold in Korea, the juxtaposition suggesting Imamura's analysis of why the Americans were in Korea in the first place. With the onset of the Cold War, the Occupation authorities became increasingly belligerent toward left-wing opinion of any kind within Japan. Later, while we see police throwing tear gas into Waseda University, Mme. Onboro is telling us, absurdly, of how she asserted her independence from her husband by having an affair with a student. Her discussion of this affair is humorously followed by the title announcing the end of the Occupation: 'Japan Gains Independence'.

"Mme. Onboro is most engaging in her comments about the role of the Emperor and his family in Japan. She tells Imamura that when Americans had asked her whether the Emperor's family were gods, she had replied, 'They're just decorative people'. The newsreels show the wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess Michiko and reveal a malcontent throwing a stone at the Imperial carriage. Toward this extreme action, and despite her generally apolitical point of view, Mme. Onboro is sympathetic: 'He was probably angry at how much was spent on the ceremony'. Instead of building the new Imperial Palace, she suggests, they would have done better to construct an orphanage."

Extract from *The Waves at Genji's Door* by Joan Mellen (New York, 1976)

WHAT DID YOU

(The 'Home Front', 1939-1945)

Many people still alive today remember the Second World War clearly: it happened during their lifetimes and affected them deeply, directly and permanently. There are many more, born after 1945, who have no direct memory of the War (though some of us may remember the last echoes of rationing, which ended only in the early Fifties). And yet, for this immediately post-war generation, now in or approaching its thirties, the Second World War is seldom seen as 'history'—as an event of the past, but not of our *own* past (if such a sweeping and generalised definition is at all acceptable). The War is distant, and yet it is peculiarly close to us. Our parents lived through it; a great many of us owe our very existence to it (the 'Post-War Bulge'); we have had it constantly re-presented to us in every conceivable way. The (now threatened) ideology of the Welfare State, our parent's stories—and equally importantly, their silences, fiction films, television films and serials, documentaries, comics, novels, photographs and so on: all these have entered our consciousness and remain there.

In a recent issue of *Time Out*, Martyn Auty wrote an article on the current boom in war and immediately post-war films and television series (*We'll Meet Again*, *Airline*, for example). He drew attention to the number of parallels which are currently being drawn between that period and this, namely the 'difficult times', the prevalent 'austerity', the need to 'tighten our belts' and for the country as a whole to 'pull together'. While this may explain a great deal (and Auty develops his argument at greater length and with more complexity than I have done here), it does not fully account for this resurgence of 'war-time nostalgia' films.

I think that it might be useful to consider the use of the word 'nostalgia'. As a concept it seems to me to be more closely linked to the idea of *memory*—however partial and distorted—than to that of *history* (see the remark above). The generation now reaching its thirties, its 'prime of life', is the first to do so since the War. While, obviously, it is not only people in their thirties who are producing these films and serials, it might nevertheless be argued that a generation has now reached an age at which it wants to 'remember' those years which, so to speak, gestated it. The term 'nostalgia' implies a longing for the return of past circumstances and events: to that extent, the description of the films and series is accurate. But I think there is more to it than this: what is taking place is a 'remembering', a reassessment and reconsidering of the world into which that generation was born.

It's no coincidence that the 'Post-War Generation' is the same one which witnessed and took part in the regeneration of the long-stagnant Women's Liberation Movement. Feminist women have developed a politics which stresses the importance of the personal as *part* of the political. The effect of this has been to make the rediscovery of the history of women, for so long written out of conventional 'History', a vital project. As feminists, and as our mothers' daughters, we have come to look at our mothers' lives (see, for example, Mary Ingham's *Now We Are Thirty* or Raynes Minns's *Bombers and Mash*), in the realization that the gates which now stand ajar—if not fully open—for us, were first opened in the war years by our mothers (and, by and large, pretty smartly slammed again on them after 1945). For the one major event that affected all women's lives, whatever their class or background, was the 1939-45 war.

But it is a curious thing: there seem to be two quite different wars, both of which exist as shared cultural 'memories' and which are in mutual conflict. There is the private one, told in story and anecdote form and there is the public one told by the media. One is subjective; the other purports to be objective, 'true', and it presents the Second World War as a time in

which men fought and women waited—an old, familiar picture.

It might appear at first sight that the evidence rather neatly supports this contradiction: our mothers tell us one thing (and statistics tell us that by mid-1943 9 single women out of 10 between the ages of 18 and 40, and 8 married women out of 10 were in the forces or in industry) and the media tell us another (the waiting women story). But this is not quite the case. The evidence is contradictory, but in more fruitful ways: it is both contradictory in itself and it *expresses* contradiction. What has happened is that the 'media memory' stereotype is historically incorrect, in that it is itself a post-war product; the films, magazines, novels etc. of '39-'45 reveal quite a different state of affairs. For six years women fought in the Second World War, and for six years the media publicly acknowledged and encouraged this. The battlefield and the Home Front became inseparable, both part of the same crisis. The private domain of the home moved into the public arena of war. It was only after 1945 that the distinction between public and private was once more asserted and 'public' again came to imply 'male' and 'private', 'female'. Ideology has intervened in memory, and the result has been the projection of a post-war image onto the reality of the war years.

This season of films, all of which except one (*The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*) were made in the years 1940-1945, has two aims. One is to try and break the ahistorical stereotypes which now surround the images of women at war. The other is to take a closer look at the very problematic contemporary representations of women and the war. The representations are problematic for a number of reasons, but which can be summed up as a powerful tension between long and short term necessities: the need, in this emergency, to pull out all the stops *but* not to pull them out so far that the social fabric fell apart. The fiction films in this season are almost all of them athletic attempts to encourage the one while discouraging the other. *Millions Like Us*, one of the British films (for we have also included some American feature films for comparison), is perhaps one of the most interesting on this account, in that it expresses not only the tensions which affected women who both had to maintain their nurturing roles within their families, but also (like Cavalcanti's *Went the Day Well?*, also in this season) the problems posed by questions of class. For this was another, and crucially important, issue which the exigencies of the War brought to the surface. Class differences, in so far as they affected production, had to be suppressed *for the duration*. *Millions Like Us* was intended to encourage this, by showing an upper-class girl settling in to work (after some difficulty) on the shop-floor of an aircraft factory. The project of all of these films (whether consciously or not) was to stress a shared and fundamental humanity. Nothing else mattered, or could be allowed to matter, in the emergency. But this sort of breakdown of social codes can only work if it is temporary: none of the films is radical enough to suggest overtly that class and sexual distinctions are social, as opposed to natural and eternal, phenomena. And yet that is precisely what they imply.

This contradiction is there for us to see on the screen. It was also there for our mothers to see and absorb, just as they absorbed those other images on the screen, which Marjorie Rosen has described in *Popcorn Venus*: 'War-time provided Hollywood with irresistibly tear-jerking plots, yet they were not without purpose, offering catharsis to their anxious, lonely audiences. Bitchery and frivolity gave place to female strength: strength and love and support between mother and daughter, mother and daughter-in-law, sister and sister—and woman and woman....Mass-marketing faith and fatalism, the cinema for the first time spoke as a priest whose ministrations were sought by millions of movie-going women. . .they learn to live *without* their men.

DO IN THE WAR, MUM?

Their survival, not as hysterical, embittered martyrs, but as womanly, capable models of human adaptability, was a Hollywood screen first. This is as true of the British cinema of this time as it is of Hollywood.

In the notes on the films and documentaries in this season I have tried, wherever possible, to reproduce contemporary reviews rather than to write new notes on them. It seemed to me that a better picture might thus be gained of both the films' intentions and of their reception and consumption at the time. What they leave out (i.e., the remarks I have made above) is almost as interesting as what they put in. No remarks are made about the deep structure of contradiction which underlies all these films; objections are made on other grounds: lack of verisimilitude, lack of interest, bad acting and so forth are the common charges made.

This season asks questions that are being asked about all aspects of women's history, and it is hoped that it may begin to answer a few of them, particularly that of 'What did *you* do in the war, mum?'. It is also intended as a celebration both of the work done by our mothers in the struggle against fascism and also of the part which they took in the battle for the liberation of women from sexual oppression.

Marion Doyen

We would like to thank Stephen Perry of the Film Department at the Imperial War Museum for his help in the selection of documentary shorts for this season.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROSIE THE RIVETER

(April 15-20)

The following is an extract from an article entitled 'Tales of Hardhatted Women', by Harry Wasserman, which appeared in the U.S. journal *Alternative Media* in Spring 1981.

Connie Field's recent documentary *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* shows how movie newsreels... manipulated American women almost 40 years ago to work in factories while men were fighting World War II. When the war ended, the same movie newsreels manipulated women to leave the jobs that had given them self-pride, decent pay, unionisation, and had allowed black women employment at major factories for the first time in U.S. history.

"I was interested in the relationship of ideology to the economy, and how it changes," says producer-director Field. "All of a sudden it was fine for women to do this kind of work, and then they should just go home after the war. It was a direct link to what the economy needed at those times."

"The women all knew that war work would end when the war was over, but they were told that at least they were learning a skill they could use other places. The women didn't want to take away jobs from returning vets, they just wanted employment. They wanted skilled work that afforded them some dignity, and this society does not always offer that to people."

Field intersperses the 40s movie myths with recent interviews with five Rosie the Riveters who convincingly dispel the newsreels' claims of on-the-job safety, childcare, and the idea that factory work is as "easy" as domestic work.

The male narrators of the wartime newsreels perfected the voice of husbandly authority that was inherited by modern television's male hustlers for floor-wax and laundry detergent. One newsreel narrator claims "they'll be safer in the factories than in their own homes," but later one



of Field's interviewees says "a piece of iron fell on me" while she was welding....

"The war propaganda related to middle class women," says Field. "They were trying to recruit the middle class women, and there were millions of women who came out of the home and went to work in factories. But the common myth is that she was *just* that woman. And that when the war ended she went gleefully back to the suburbs and had 2.5 children and lived happily ever after."

"But I was interested in making a film specifically about working class women. Because of the class nature of this society, factory jobs were not meant to be the jobs women could get, because they paid a lot more than domestic jobs. They took the work for purely economic reasons. They needed to earn a living. You could make 7 dollars a week working as a domestic or you could get into the plants and make 50."

The film originated when a California group called Jobs for Older Women held a Rosie the Riveters reunion in Oakland in 1974, partially to advise ex-Rosies who haven't had such good jobs since World War II on how they can still be retrained. Field attended the conference because of her interest in women's history, and there she realised that Rosie had an untold story that needed to be included in the history of W.W. II right beside the heroic G I Joes....

Much of the movie's charm comes from the music, 'jive' songs from the era, 'Rosie the Riveter' and Benny Goodman's 'Minnie's in the Money'.... "There was a great song I wanted to use but there wasn't any way to do it. It was a song written by Leadbelly, called 'National Defence Blues', and it goes, 'I have a little woman working on that national defence/Her paycheck is as big as mine/That little woman doesn't love me no more/When that defence is gone that woman's gonna lose her Cadillac and that defence won't come no more.' It really showed the domestic tension."

(Director: Connie Field. With: Lola Weixel, Margaret White, Lyn Childs. Part in colour. 65 mins. 16 mm.)

Support film:

MRS JOHN BULL PREPARED

"This is the most extensive compilation made at the time (1918) about the role of British women in the First World War. Beginning with a fantasy sequence which shows the Spirit of Womanhood overcoming male chauvinist resistance, the film goes on to illustrate the many areas where women were employed in the war effort."—Imperial War Museum catalogue notes.

(G.B., 1918. Black and white. 53 mins. 16 mm. print.)

TENDER COMRADE

(April 15)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin's* review (30 April, 1944) went as follows: "Romantic drama. The time comes when Chris Jones has to leave his wife Jo and go overseas. She continues to work, and eventually she and three other women in the factory whose husbands are also overseas pool expenses and set up house together with a German refugee as their housekeeper. The film follows their little (n.b. note the derogatory use of that 'little') troubles, their joy at getting news, the alarm which later turns out to be false and one of their men is missing, the birth of a baby to Jo.... This sentimental film with Ginger Rogers' set speeches has obviously been made to steel the Americans against losses to come. Ruth Hussey, in a smaller part as the wife who is not so strict as the others, gets good marks for her efforts which run those of the better known and more experienced Miss Rogers very close."

(Director: Edward Dmytryk. U.S.A., 1943. With: Ginger Rogers, Robert Ryan, Ruth Hussey. Black and white. Cert U. 102 mins.)

Supporting film:

WORLD OF PLENTY

A documentary by Paul Rotha about food. (G.B., 1943. Black and white, 46 mins. 16 mm. print.)

THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER

(April 16)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* of 31 August 1944 said: "Drama. In 1914 Susan Dunn came to England for a fortnight's visit. On the last day she meets Sir John Ashwood and after a lightning courtship marries him. He is killed just before the Armistice, leaving her with an infant son. Though American at heart she brings him up in the best traditions of the English landed gentry. As the eldest son of the eldest son he joins the same regiment as his father. When war breaks out his mother as a V.A.D. takes over a hospital in London and to this he is brought back seriously wounded from a raid on France.... Like so many of these exquisitely produced M.G.M. goodwill films it just fails to hit the mark. For those inclined to sentiment the pathos of the story and the skill of its direction will redeem the distortion of the English scene and English manner..." (Director: Clarence Brown. U.S.A., 1944. With: Irene Dunne, Alan Marshall, Roddy McDowell. Black and white. Cert. U. 124 mins. 16 mm. print.)

Supporting film:

LONDON CAN TAKE IT

"The B.F.I. Distribution catalogue observes: "The framework of the wartime documentary provided [Humphrey] Jennings with the context in which he made his best films. His works are not particularly triumphalist: he is more interested in showing how people behave under stress and how the war called forth what he considered to be the most positive and worthwhile aspects of life in Britain. *London Can Take It* was his first real evocation of British people coping with the war." (Directors: Humphrey Jennings, Harry Watt. G.B., 1940. Black and white. 10 mins. 16 mm. print.)

GOVERNMENT GIRL

(April 17)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* of 30 September 1944 reviewed the film as follows: "Comedy. When Ed Brown went to Washington to organise bomber production he decided that the job couldn't be done because of the tortuous methods necessary to meet governmental requirements. But his secretary spurred him on and he hijacked all sorts of goods, bucked priorities, cut red tape and produced more bombers than he had asked for. His unorthodox methods led to a Senate inquiry, but an impassioned speech by his secretary convinced the Senators that this sort of disorganising organisation was the thing to win the war, and Ed Brown and secretary married to live happily ever after. Coming from such an experienced film writer as Nichols, who produced and wrote as well as directed this piece, the story is the most disappointing part of this film. It never gets to grips with the actualities of its setting or its basic plot problems, and its climax in the speech to the Senators rings as falsely as anything could. Directorially, however, Nichols scores with his handling of the broad farce which is the film's chief attraction. He evokes from Olivia de Havilland a gusto and comic ability which marks this as quite one of her better performances. Sonny Tufts is ruggedly attractive as the 'plane producer'." (Director: Dudley Nichols. U.S.A., 1944. With: Olivia de Havilland, Sonny Tufts. Black and white. Certificate U. 93 minutes. 16 mm. print.)

Supporting films:

WORDS FOR BATTLE

"Just as *London Can Take It* used a war correspondent's despatch for its commentary, so this film uses passages from various well-known works, once again illustrating Jennings's dislike of personal invention in art and his belief in the use of 'public' material. Various favourite writers are used (Blake and Milton especially) as well as the music of Handel. Jennings is here trying to reinterpret the words and music in the light of the contemporary wartime situation...."—B.F.I. Distribution Catalogue notes. (Director: Humphrey Jennings. G.B., 1941. Black and white. 8 mins.)

And:

MISS GRANT GOES TO THE DOOR

"This film met with some criticism for its lack of

realism, but while it is true that few people were called upon to deal with German paratroopers speaking fluent English, Miss Grant herself is a not unrecognisable figure. If one remembers that it was made at the height of the invasion scare, (the film) presents its message with remarkable efficiency and economy." (Imperial War Museum catalogue notes).

(Director: Thorold Dickinson. G.B., 1940. Black and white. 7 mins. 16 mm.)

MRS MINIVER

(April 18)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* of 31 July 1942 said: "Drama. Mr and Mrs Miniver are the average reasonably well-off middle-class couple with a son at Oxford, a small daughter and younger son. They enjoy the ordinary routine of a happily married couple, whose little extravagances require carefully but comfortably timed confession. War is declared. They, like thousands in this country, face the horrors and inconveniences with courage and faith in the future. There is scarcely a story in the ordinary sense to be told except that every life is of itself a story.... The family is bombed in their shelter and Mrs Miniver deals with a German parachutist. In spite of obvious criticism that can be made—and rightly—this is a most moving film, directed with great sympathy and insight by William Wyler. The acting of Greer Garson as Mrs Miniver is superb and that of Walter Pidgeon as her husband impeccable. The film is as gracious a tribute as could be paid to Britain's real life in time of stress and agony...." A note: Winston Churchill observed that this film was a major contribution to the winning of the war. (Director: William Wyler. U.S.A., 1942. With: Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Teresa Wright. Black and white. Certificate U. 133 minutes.)

Supporting film:

JANE BROWN CHANGES HER JOB

"A typist, moved by an advertisement in a newspaper, decides to volunteer for war-work. The Employment Exchange refer her to a government Training Centre where she learns about the making and fitting of aeroplane parts.... The Centre find her and her friend their first job, in a factory manufacturing Spitfires." The film's treatment is categorised as 'Documentary Canvassing'. (Director: Harold Cooper. G.B., 1941. Black and white. 8 minutes.)

WENT THE DAY WELL?

(April 22)

Here is the *Monthly Film Bulletin* review (of 30

November, 1942): "War drama. In Whitsun, 1942, the village of Bramley Green seemed far away from the war. Then the villagers are surprised to see lorry-loads of Royal Engineers arrive, but welcome them and bustle round to find billets for them. They have no reason to suspect the troops are German paratroops and that their village leader, Oliver Wilsford, is a Fifth Columnist. Apparently trivial things arouse suspicions and eventually the Germans declare themselves, round up the villagers and intimidate them. The community is helpless.... Graham Greene has written a good story but the scripting is indifferent, banal at times, and the direction lacks cohesion.... The photography and lighting are good, but the values of the film could have been increased by a slightly different approach and more convincing dialogue and direction." And here are some observations by Charles Barr in *Ealing Studios* about the film: "Taking a long view, the film might be exploited in a pacifist cause (as its director, Alberto Cavalcanti had later claimed that it should be), but in the short term it unequivocally urges alert and robust self-defence. It continuously undermines the seductiveness of cosy English façades, easy-going English qualities: to be easy-going can in war be criminally negligent. Don't be lulled by church bells, or English-looking faces. Be prepared. And don't defer automatically to well-spoken officers." (Director: Alberto Cavalcanti. G.B., 1943. With: Leslie Banks, Basil Sydney, Marie Lohr. Black and white. Certificate A. 92 minutes.)

Supporting film:

THEY ALSO SERVE

"A tribute to the 'housewives of Britain', in the format of a day in the life of a 'typical' household during wartime and centring round the mother/housewife role." The Imperial War Museum's catalogue places the 'treatment' of the film in the category 'Biography Inspirational'. (Director: R. I. Grierson. G.B., 1940. Black and white. 25 minutes. 16 mm. print.)

SINCE YOU WENT AWAY

(April 28)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* of 31 January 1945, on *Since You Went Away*: "War on the American domestic front. Ann, wife of Tim, is left behind at home with their daughters, Jane and Bridget, while he goes forth to war. All feel the loneliness and disruption of family life but try not to make a fuss.... The dreaded cable comes to say that Tim is missing, and Ann becomes more deeply aware of the war and more anxious to take an active part in it. She becomes a welder and finds a measure of comfort in her work-filled days.... The plot is deliberately undramatic and ordinary, a tale true
'Since You Went Away'



of millions of women the world over, though the American heroine seems rather slow at discovering the implications of world war and to take a wholly personal view of it.... The film lasts three hours and gives the same impression as a comfortable leisurely novel with many authentic touches of family life, its tears and laughter, its corporate affection and individual privacy. Produced by David Selznick and directed by John Cromwell, it is a film which will be more popular with women than with men.'

(Director: John Cromwell. U.S.A., 1945. With: Claudette Colbert, Jennifer Jones, Shirley Temple, Joseph Cotten. Black and white. Certificate U. 180 minutes. 16 mm. print.)

Supporting film:

WORDS AND ACTIONS

A documentary about the need for co-operation in wartime.

(Director: Max Anderson. G.B., 1943. Black and white. 14 minutes. 16 mm. print.)



A CANTERBURY TALE

(April 29)

A Canterbury Tale, a Powell-Pressburger collaboration, presents a fantastic portrait of war-time Britain. An American-hating Englishwoman pours glue into the hair of British girls who date American servicemen. A young woman comes down to Kent as a Land Army girl, is accompanied from the station by an American soldier, is covered in glue and sets herself to find out who the 'Glue-man' is. Rather loosely hung about this bizarre plot is an extraordinary, quasi-mystical celebration of the values enshrined in English (not British) traditions — particularly in that of the Canterbury pilgrimage — and their influence on the lives of a small group of people. Some of the film is almost embarrassing in its subdued religiosity: but much of it (most notably Eric Portman's and Dennis Price's performances) is both fascinating and moving. Not, strictly speaking, a film about women on the Home Front, it has nevertheless been included in this season as an example of a form of war-time filmmaking often called 'inspirational'.

(Directors: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. With: Eric Portman, Sheila Sim, Dennis Price. Black and white. U Certificate. 124 minutes).

Supporting film:

W.V.S. (Women's Voluntary Services)

The catalogue's synopsis of the film serves to show at least some of the extraordinary range of essential work done by the WVS during the Second World War. They were, in fact, a crucial adjunct to the social services. Activities shown: administering collection and distribution of clothing (British and American donations), sewing oilskins for seamen — setting up a

neighbourhood salvage dump — collecting kitchen scraps (WVS pig-keeper) — helping furnish new rooms for bombed out families — assisting in evacuation (reception centre, driving transport, country nursery for infants, billeting service). Reel 2: immediate care for air-raid victims (reception, information, clothing etc.) — assisting local government in rehousing victims — mobile canteen (dockers, demolition workers) and "Queen's Messengers" — information for services personnel on railway stations — assisting (as ambulance drivers) in lifeboat rescue operation in Scottish port'.

(Director: Louise Birt. G.B., 1941. Producer: Sydney Box and James Carr. Music: William Alwyn. Black and white. 9 minutes. 16 mm.)

MILLIONS LIKE US

(May 19)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin's* review (30 December 1943) of *Millions Like Us*: "Drama. The Crowson family is broken up by the war. The married daughter gets her old job back, another joins the A.T.S., and Celia, the youngest is drafted into an aeroplane factory. There she meets a young pilot, whom she marries; shortly afterwards he is reported missing over Germany but she still carries on. Interwoven with the main plot is the story of a snobbish girl who is also drafted to the factory and ultimately falls in love with her foreman. Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, the co-directors of this film, have managed to introduce a realist atmosphere and a documentary touch to life in an aircraft factory..... Finally, both directors are again to be congratulated on the restraint which they have shown, especially in the little sequence in which the news of her husband's death is broken to Celia."

(Directors: Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat. G.B., 1943. With: Patricia Roc, Gordon Jackson, Moore Marriott, Eric Portman. Black and white. Cert U. 101 mins.)

Supporting films:

THE WAY TO THE STARS

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* said of Anthony Asquith's restrained and moving film, which portrays the lives of a group of airmen and of the people in a nearby hotel: "The one major criticism which a precisian might make of this film is that it suffers from a certain looseness of construction, a slight dissipation of interest, because it embraces too many diverse ideas. The principal problem is presumably the question which perplexes Peter (a young airman, played by John Mills). Has a man who is daily courting death the right to marry? (a question answered in the affirmative, but only by the emphatic assertion of Toddy, not because it is really resolved). But another subject hardly less important which intrudes itself is the question of Anglo-American relationships of which several facets are shown..... And finally, much emphasis is laid on the last line of a poem (by John Pudney) to a dead airman, 'Johnny Head-in-air' — 'see that his children are fed' (in fact the poem ends: 'But keep your head/And see his children fed'); was that the film's main point? The truth is that this film is presumably conceived, and must be judged, not primarily as one of idea or plot, or character, but as a film of atmosphere, and so regarded, it is so successful and so entertaining that it must rank as one of the outstanding British films of the war years..... To cavil at defects which prevent it from being a great film becomes a form of ingratitude."

(Director: Anthony Asquith. G.B., 1945. With: Michael Redgrave, Rosamund John, John Mills. Black and white. Cert. U. 109 mins.)

And:

THEY KEEP THE WHEELS TURNING

"A film with the dual purpose of stressing the importance of repairing civilian vehicles (as a means of shielding new vehicle production for military priority) and showing the ability of women to take on much of this sort of work... The film also contains a mild plea to skilled workers not to enlist in the forces." — Notes from the Imperial Museum Film Catalogue.

(Director: Francis Searle. G.B., 1942. Black and white. 9 mins. 16 mm. print.)

FIRES WERE STARTED

(June 19)

"This film concerns the work of the Auxiliary Fire Service during the London blitz, and concentrates on 24 hours in the life of one particular fire-fighting team. Here Jennings has carefully adapted the associative and non-narrative style, which he perfected in films like *Listen to Britain*, to fit the demands of a basically linear narrative structure.

"This was the first time that Jennings had had to deal with characters and dramatic relationships; all the actors were in fact firemen and much of the dialogue was improvised on the spot; as a consequence the film has a strong ring of truth in its portrayal of character and situation, giving the lie to any notion that Jennings could not understand or deal with 'ordinary' people, as was suggested by some of Jennings's contemporaries." — B.F.I. Distribution Catalogue notes.

(Director: Humphrey Jennings. G.B., 1943. Black and white. 80 mins.)

Supporting films:

NIGHT SHIFT

The Imperial War Museum Catalogue notes that this account of a night shift's work in an armaments factory has "no commentary and a minimum of dramatised conversation, which is anyway rather artificial but the film succeeds in giving remarkably clear impression of factory life, especially of women workers, both of the shop floor and in the canteen."

(Director: Jack Chambers. G.B., 1942. Black and white. 15 mins. 16 mm.)

And:

RATIONING IN BRITAIN

An American commentary looks at the effects of rationing in Britain on a typical family at the end of the war. The film is interesting not only for the explanation of how the rationing system worked but also as an insight into what Americans considered to be a 'typical English family'.

(U.S.A., 1944. Black and white. 11 mins. 16 mm.)

PERFECT STRANGERS

(June 27)

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* review (30 September 1945): "War-time marital comedy-drama. The film tells the story of a young married couple, Robert Wilson, a timid, dyspeptic, unattractive clerk, and Catherine, his dowdy wife who has a perpetual cold in the head. The war sends Robert into the Navy, which cures his indigestion and makes him strong, brave and handsome, and Catherine into the W.R.N.S., which cures her cold and makes her glamorous. It is perhaps ungracious to wonder how many other weak digestions the Navy has ruined completely and how many Wrens have caught their death of cold...." The *M.F.B.* reviewer ends on a stiffly disapproving note: "This is a superficial film, which assumes that all that is needed for marital happiness and success in life is physical well-being and glamour."

(Director: Alexander Korda. G.B., 1945. With: Deborah Kerr, Robert Donat, Glynis Johns. Black and white. Cert. A. 102 mins.)

Supporting film:

LISTEN TO BRITAIN

"Basically, the film is a portrait of Britain at war. As Jim Hillier points out in *Studies in Documentary*, the ordering of the images in this film illustrates two of Jennings's major preoccupations. Firstly, 'the sequence of images acts as a reminder of the interdependence and essentiality of people's functions....' Secondly, by its continuous intermingling of pastoral and industrial scenes, the film 'expresses Jennings's sense of the indivisibility of Britain, not only of task, but of landscape.' Thus, ultimately, the film is a highly affirmative expression of the unity of Britain at war." — B.F.I. Distribution Catalogue notes.

(Director: Humphrey Jennings. G.B., 1942. Black and white. 20 mins. 16 mm. print.)

DIRECTIONS IN GAY CINEMA

The past few years have seen the emergence of something approaching an authentically gay cinema—films, and a surrounding film culture of discussion, criticism and events (festivals, seasons, seminars) for, by and about gay women and men. The most recent success in this direction is the widely acclaimed—by straight and gay critics and audiences alike—*Taxi zum Klo*. This short season of gay cinema is built around this film, putting it into the context of earlier examples of gay cinema.

By, for and about gay people—this has to be what we mean by 'gay cinema'. Gayness has long been a subject-matter in films, going back into the Twenties as Vito Russo's book *The Celluloid Closet* (reviewed elsewhere in this programme) reveals. But it has been gayness as seen by those who were not themselves gay, and who were, moreover, concerned to present gayness, usually in demeaning and derogatory fashion, to others who were not gay. The list of famous gay films—*Victim*, *The Loudest Whisper*, *The Killing of Sister George*, *Staircase*, and so on—is not really a list of gay films at all but of straight films about what they take gayness to be. Equally, there have been many important film-makers—directors, performers, designers, writers—who have been gay, but whose films have to be read 'between the frames' if one is to see any expression of gay issues. There is something gay about the films of, say, Dorothy Arzner, Montgomery Clift or Sergei Eisenstein, but it takes some reading in to see it, and they are by no means obviously by, for and about gay people.

But the 'by, for and about' criterion of gay cinema has a further implication, suggested by the significance of the word 'gay' itself. Gay is a term that gay people themselves have chosen to describe themselves—it is part of a deliberate strategy of self-definition, a refusal to accept the definitions that society has imposed on us. So gay cinema, even if it was produced before the current use of the word gay, has in some sense to be concerned with championing the rights and rightness of gayness, and not just reproducing straight definitions, which are best indicated by such straight words as 'homosexual' (gays as a clinical category) or 'queer' (gays as evil or sick). In this context, films like *Death in Venice*, *Boys in the Band* or the recent *To Forget Venice* are not gay films either, because they operate so firmly within straight assumptions about gayness.

It is of course not easy to shake off the dominant definition of what you are. Some of the films in this season are clearly marked by the 'homosexual' and 'queer' identities as well as gay ones; and gay films are always made in the shadow of heterosexual society. It would be very surprising indeed if gay cinema was not marked by assumptions and values derived from the straight world; the point is the degree to which the films are in struggle to represent a gay-defined gay identity.

There is also the question of what forms are appropriate to express a gay identity. A certain kind of radical film criticism has tended to argue that the form a film takes crucially determines what a film can and can't say, and therefore that radical film-makers cannot just take over existing cinematic forms but must either invent new ones or drastically

transform the existing ones. This tends to lead to various kinds of avant-garde practice, and a distrust of both story-telling and documentary. The problem with this argument from a gay point of view is that avant-garde forms are no more a guarantee of proper gay expression than are story or documentary forms. All need to be looked at carefully, to see to what extent they do have heterosexual assumptions built into them; but all may be used by gay film-makers, often in new and original ways. This question of the relation between film form and the development of a gay film practice is what I want to look at in the discussion session on Sunday April 25 at 2.30 pm. We'll be showing at that session a very traditional, but positive, documentary about a gay priest coming-out (*A Position of Faith*), a classic avant-garde, underground film about a young man's gay sexual fantasies (*Fireworks*) and Jan Oxenburgh's marvellously funny exploration of lesbian stereotyping in *Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts*. Another example of Jan Oxenburgh's work exploring how film represents lesbians, *Home Movie*, will accompany the screening of *Mädchen in Uniform*, and an example of contemporary gay male avant-garde film making, *Un Certain Désir*, will be shown with *We Were One Man*.

The choice of films for the season was determined, first, by the general definition of gay cinema just discussed, and then, second, by what films have not been shown in Birmingham, recently or ever. *Word is Out* and *Outrageous* are missing for that reason. The obvious thing that emerges is a bias in favour of gay men. There are in fact far more films about lesbians than about gay men, but 90% of them are heterosexual male pornography. Films made by, for and about lesbians are very thin on the ground, partly because women in general still have far less access to the expensive and technically mystified art of film-making than do men. Significantly, two of the lesbian films shown here (*Town Bloody Hall* and *Some American Feminists*) are not only lesbian but see lesbianism as very much part of the general feminist movement in the USA. Gay male politics tends to be a tiny enclave within the male gay sub-culture, whereas lesbian politics is part of a very broad movement, and the films that get made reflect this. *Town Bloody Hall* and *Some American Feminists* are within the traditions of cinema-verité/left film-making, as are most of the other (wholly or part) lesbian films in the season. *In the Best Interests of the Children* is an example of the 'talking heads' documentary that was particularly favoured by early Seventies feminist film-makers and is in many ways, as Julia Lesage has pointed out, the cinematic equivalent of consciousness raising, giving women the voice. *Witches and Dykes*, *Faggots and Poofers* and *Greetings from Washington, D.C.* are both records of political actions taken jointly by lesbians and gay men. It is interesting that what little lesbian film-making there has been, has been so predominantly within documentary modes. Documentary is thought of as in some sense 'capturing' reality, but historically it is significant whose reality has been captured. Given the extraordinary invisibility surrounding lesbianism, it is perhaps unsurprising

that lesbian film-makers' first task has been simply to show that lesbians too are a reality.

But this makes it all the more remarkable that the one full-length fiction feature film that we could even begin to call lesbian was made in 1931 in a Germany already under the shadow of Nazism. *Mädchen in Uniform*, at long last back in distribution, also sees lesbianism as part of a wider set of oppression, both female and also authoritarianism. Yet precisely to make links between lesbianism, women's oppression and authoritarian patterns of power seems at first sight like an amazing act of anticipation of the Seventies lesbian movement. But astonishing though *Mädchen* is, it is worth remembering that there was both a gay movement in Germany in the Twenties, focused around Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Reform, and a specific current of radical lesbian writings stemming from the turn of the century and interlinked with the suffrage movement. In other words, *Mädchen* comes out of a context that was struggling with questions of gay identity. Like all the other films in the season, it is that bedrock of struggle that gives it its clarity and force.

In many ways, the male gay films are more problematically gay than the lesbian films. It seemed important to recover some examples of gay film-making made in the wilderness between the defeat of Hirschfeld by the Nazis and the emergence of gay reform movements in Holland, Britain and the USA in the Fifties and Sixties. But it is questionable whether the rather melancholy imagery of *Lot in Sodom*, or the covert gayness of *Testament of Orpheus* or the anguished masochism of *Children*, are so very confidently gay. Indeed, how could they have been? What is more surprising is that even *Army of Lovers*, *We Were One Man* and *Nighthawks* seem pretty gloomy, seem to be lacking the affirmation of gay identity that we might expect and which is certainly present in *Taxi zum Klo*.

Finally, we have included a late-night show of what can variously be described as camp, tackiness or bad taste. Films like *Glen or Glenda?* and *Pink Flamingoes* are gay more because of the way gays respond to them than because of what they are about. One, *Glen or Glenda?*, is a po-faced (but surely only half serious) Fifties attempt to handle the 'problem' of transvestism. *Pink Flamingoes* uses drag and other aspects of gender-fuck to mount a wild experience of heaven knows what. Both are tangential to the reality of most gay men's lives (most transvestites are heterosexual, few gay men are into drag), and yet fundamental to both that tradition of humour known as camp (important as a mode of interaction as much as a kind of wit) and to the peculiar awareness of sex roles that being gay almost inevitably continues to bring.

Two of the screenings in the season are particularly important. The screening of *Taxi zum Klo* on Saturday May 1 at 8.30 pm. will be a benefit screening, proceeds to go to the Gay Centre fund. And for the late show of *Glen or Glenda?* and *Pink Flamingoes* on May 14 and 15 we hope people will feel free to dress up, so that the auditorium and coffee bar will be as camp and colourful as the images on the screen.

Richard Dyer



TAXI ZUM KLO

(April 22-27; April 29-May 1)

Director: Frank Ripploh.

West Germany, 1981.

Script: Frank Ripploh.

Photography: Horst Schier, Hannes Geyer.

Music: "Flying Gay" by Hans Wittstatt.

Leading Players Frank Ripploh (*Frank*), Bernd Broderup (*Bernd*), Orpha Termin (*Female Neighbour*), Peter Fahrni (*Garage Attendant*), Dieter Götde (*Masseur*).

Colour. English subtitles. Uncertified version. 94 minutes.

Taxi Zum Klo has rightly been hailed as something of a break-through gay film. It ends happily; it is straightforward and unapologetic; and it tries to think through a central issue within gay culture, that of the conflict between promiscuity and monogamy. It does all this in an easy, accessible manner; it is funny and sexy, with a clear narrative line that nonetheless allows for many moments of lyricism, incidental characterisations and social comments.

The fact that it has a happy ending makes it remarkable. Most of the films in this season have fairly glum endings—often death, or at any rate a sense of the hopelessness of things. *Taxi Zum Klo* ends on a high, with its hero's anarchistic coming-out at the school where he works; a title after the end also suggests that his conflict with his lover is later resolved. This alone makes it a remarkable film. But it has also along the way very clearly and cheerfully presented a picture of male gay life. There is no attempt to glamorise gay life, but no attempt to depict it in sordid or depressing ways—the film neither apologises, grovels nor idealises. It simply accepts gay life, not as the same as straight life—far from it—but as ordinary in its own terms as straight life. Casual sex, the ups and downs of domesticity, camp and drag, going to work—the mixture of things that make up everyday life is different from that of the straight world, but they are treated as the normal gay mixture, nothing to be remarked upon, explained or excused. There is even a certain embrace of the inevitable grottness of life, a stubborn refusal to see life cleaned up, prettified, Hollywoodised. Like most of the new German Cinema, *Taxi Zum Klo*'s use of grainy photography, hard-colour stock, location shooting, unfiltered sound and lower middle-class urban settings do not betoken

a disgust with life but a recognition of its mucky banality.

The narrative is structured around the tension for the hero between compulsive promiscuity and the attractions of a monogamous relationship. In principle the film offers the viewer these as a difficult choice, with the possibility of finding new forms of relationship which combine the two. In practice, the hero is the hero, the centre of the film. His lover's desire for monogamy is not really given weight within the film, while the hero's promiscuity is the source of much of the humour, excitement and eroticism in the film—that is, many of its chief pleasures as a film are associated with promiscuity. I find the treatment of the hero, his looks especially, fits rather too comfortably with traditional ideas about rampant male sexuality which has to have its outlet; his monogamous lover is soft and round in looks (not bearded and leathered), he does the cooking, he is 'feminine'. The film, in effectively valorising promiscuity, also valorises masculinity in rather traditional forms. The treatment of sex and of women thus become aspects of the film that I'm uneasy about.

The sex scenes are different according to whether they take place within promiscuity or monogamy. If the former they are very explicit, involving a range of sexual activity; whereas the one sex scene between the hero and his lover is more within the conventions of romantic coupling of the cinema. Actually the simplest way of stating the difference is that in the promiscuity sex scenes we see penises, come, urine; in the monogamy ones we see none of these. It's as if the simplest facts of sexuality—the genital—can only be shown when the sex is real (i.e. promiscuous, masculine, 'hard', 'going all the way'); when it is romantic it somehow stops being fully sexual. The film has no space for something that would break down the distinction between sex and love, for the sexuality of romance, the romance of sexuality.

Women are not central characters in the film, yet they are very important to it. The hero is very friendly with women; in particular, they are able to talk about sex together. Does this reduce women to their sexuality, or does it offer a space in which women can speak the unspoken of their own sexuality? At one point, the hero admits that he is 'traumatised' by the thought of female genitals. Is this just the film's essential misogyny, or a moment when a very widespread feeling (not confined to gay men) is at least, and courageously, acknowledged? Does it tend to feed into the common myth that gay men are gay because they can't stand women? At a seminar on the film at the I.C.A. recently all these views were aired—some

of those who defended the film's treatment of women being women themselves. The centrality of the hero's masculine-defined sexuality certainly provokes crucial questions about how women are seen in the film.

There is no doubt that *Taxi Zum Klo* is an important and likeable film. It is just because it is so important, because some may take it to be a statement of where gay men are at today, that we need to question its assumption, that we need to argue with it.

Richard Dyer

WE WERE ONE MAN

(Nous étions un seul homme)

(April 19)

"*We Were One Man* is a classic (and, of course, unliberated) gay male fantasy: falling in love with a seemingly unattainable het. Guy (Serge Avédikian) is a woodsman living alone in the middle of a forest area south of Bordeaux called 'Les Landes'. The year is 1943, and France is occupied. But when Guy discovers a German soldier (Rolf) lying wounded in the woods, he unhesitatingly takes him in, nurses him back to health, and attempts to forestall his return to the army. Fascinated by the retarded Frenchman's strange behaviour, the German stays. In time, a passionate relationship develops, which is later complicated by the involvement of Janine (Catherine Albin), Guy's girlfriend. The *ménage*, predictably, is doomed. But the film ends powerfully: the final sequences is an emotionally taut, boldly sentimental conclusion which transcends the occasional trite clichés of Valois's script..."—Jack Babuscio/*Gay News*, No. 232. (Director: Philippe Vallois. France, 1978. With: Serge Avédikian, Piotr Stanislas, Catherine Albin. Colour. English subtitles. Uncertified. 90 mins. 16 mm print.)

Supporting film:

A CERTAIN DESIRE

A film about waiting and desire, desire and seduction and love, its uncertainty. *A Certain Desire* is built like a Greek tragedy, with the main characters building up situations (the pictures) and voices over the 'the choir' (soundtrack). (Director: Bruno de Florence. Great Britain, 1980. 16 mm.)

ARMY OF LOVERS OR REVOLT OF THE PERVERTS

(April 23)

Von Praunheim's entertaining and provocative account of the development of gay liberation struggles in the U.S.A. from Stonewall to Anita Bryant and the defeat of the Briggs' initiative in California. Interviews with Fred Halstead, Michael Kearns, Sarah Montgomery, Troy Perry, John Rechy, Russel Veigh and many others, present the complexity and diversity of the gay movement in the States.

"Tensions and conflicts of the world's largest gay movement are exposed but not resolved. If the category 'gay' ever denoted an homogeneous unity, this film denies it. Gay nazis, gay socialists, gay careerists, blown away hippy queens, sado-masochists and gentle body-lovers On and on the camera uncovers and then lets play, refusing any abstract, superimposed definition of gay or gay politics." (Philip Derbyshire/*Time Out*).—The Other Cinema Catalogue notes.

(Director: Rosa von Praunheim. W. Germany/U.S.A., 1972-79. Colour. 98 mins. 16 mm.)

Supporting film:

GREETINGS FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

"Greetings from Washington, D.C. is a moving, often hilarious film, celebrating the more than one hundred thousand lesbians and gay men who marched past the White House and gathered in the Mall on October 14, 1979 to call for Gay Rights. Greetings is a vibrant, new documentary which combined the high-camp romance of underground gay culture with the on-the-spot vitality of new non-fiction film.

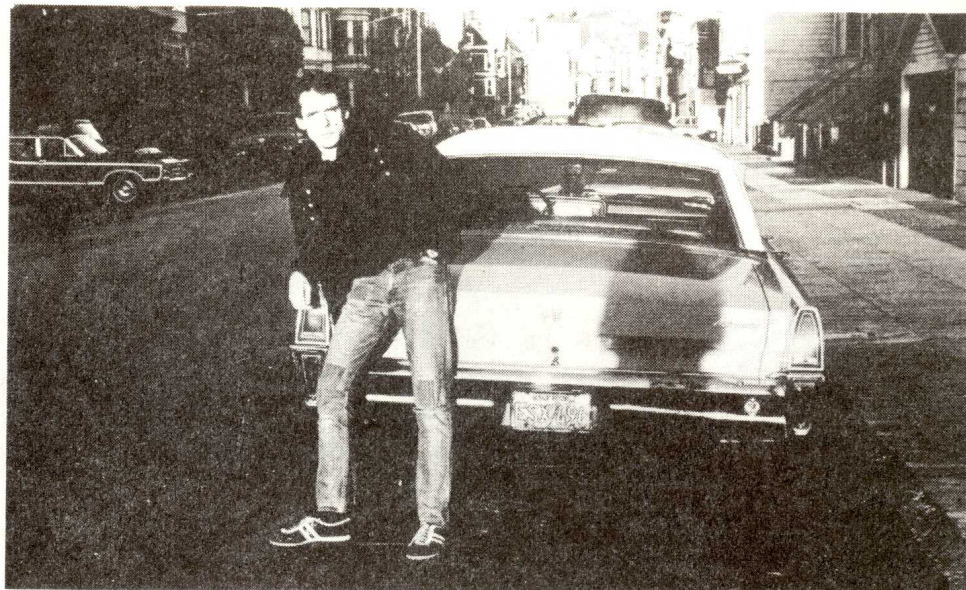
"The ethnic, social and economic diversity of the group who gathered in Washington suggested the strength found in a unified national movement for human and civil rights. It was grassroots effort, but professionally organised. It was a joyous and crucial event in gaining national visibility and credibility for the Gay Rights movement."—The Other Cinema Catalogue notes.

(Director: Lucy Winer. U.S.A., 1981. Colour. 28 mins. 16 mm.)

MAIDENS IN UNIFORM (Mädchen in Uniform)

(April 24)

"Mädchen in Uniform is not only anti-fascist, but also anti-patriarchal, in its politics. . . It is a film about sexual repression in the name of social harmony, about the absent patriarchy and its forms of presence, about bonds between women which represent attraction instead of repulsion, and about the release of powers that can



'Army of Lovers of Revolt of the Perverts'

accompany the identification of a lesbian sexuality. The film is a dual coming-out story: that of Manuela, the adolescent who voices 'the love that dares not speak its name' and who, in distinguishing between fantasy and desire, dares to act upon the latter; and that of Fraulein von Bernburg, the teacher who repudiates her own role as an agent of suppression and wins her own freedom by accepting her attraction to another woman. In this reading, the film remains a profoundly anti-fascist drama, but now its political significance becomes a direct consequence of the film's properly central subject (of lesbianism) rather than a covert message wrapped in an attractive but irrelevant metaphor. If *Mädchen in Uniform* is the first truly radical lesbian film, it is also a fairly typical product of late Weimar society, a society in which 'homosexuality became a form of fashionable behaviour' linked to 'the Weimar idea of making a complete break with the staid and bankrupt past of one's parents' generation.' As such, it offers a particularly clear example of the interplay between personal and collective politics—and the revolutionary potential inherent in the conjunction of the two."—B. Ruby Rich/*Jump Cut*, Nos. 24/25 (extract).

Supporting film:

HOME MOVIE

"Using actual home movies of herself as a child and high-school cheerleader, the film-maker talks about growing up as a lesbian and the experience of coming out. A warm and funny film that makes the experience of growing up gay accessible to everybody."—The Other Cinema catalogue notes. (Director: Jan Oxenberg, U.S.A., 1973. Colour. 12 mins. 16 mm.)



'Maidens in Uniform'

NIGHTHAWKS

(April 26)

"Ron Peck and Paul Hallam, the director and producer of *Nighthawks*, spent five years in planning and raising money for their film about a gay teacher (Ken Robertson) who spends his nights cruising in bars and discos and having one-night stands. *Nighthawks* provides an almost documentary look at the night-time scene and the ritualistic life of one man who is beginning to realize that he leads two separate lives. In the climax of the film, the students in his geography class ask him if he is 'queer', and he tells them he is gay. The dispassionate view of London gay nightlife allows a gay male audience to experience the hunt as more than a passive spectator. There is an uncanny feeling that each member of the audience is himself cruising, recognising a look, a gesture, a glance, then realising it is meant for the character in the film, through whose eyes we are looking. No slick and sensational Hollywood peep show, *Nighthawks* is a good, perceptive film with modest intentions, and it succeeds without compromising its scope for commercial reasons."—Vito Russo/*The Celluloid Closet* (extract). (Directors: Ron Peck, Paul Hallam. G.B., 1978. With: Ken Robertson, Tony Westrope, Rachel Nicholas James. Colour. Cert. X. 113 mins.)

Supporting film:

CHILDREN

Children, directed by Terence Davies in 1974, is a short film dealing with a grown man's memories of the awakening of his homosexual feelings in adolescence. In its careful attention to the grainy texture of everyday life and its restraint, it is characteristic of a particular strain of British independent film-making, though one in which few gay films have been made.

THE TESTAMENT OF ORPHEUS/ LOT IN SODOM

(June 10)

Both *Le Testament d'Orphée* and *Lot in Sodom* may be considered classic gay films, made on the margins of cinema. Jean Cocteau, protected by his status as Poet/Artist, nevertheless explores gay imagery in *Testament* in a covert manner that perhaps contributes to the idea that homosexuality is as much a mystique as a sexual preference. *Lot in Sodom* is more wholly experimental—or just 'arty'—in form, emerging from the brief flurry of American avant-garde activity in the early Thirties, and dealing with the destruction of the Biblical city in, to quote Vito Russo, 'lurid and sometimes racist but always fascinating terms'. Both films use the figure of the angel or poet as doomed young man as a metaphor for homosexual desire—an image, that is, of both what is desired and the person who desires. If this does not seem very progressive in post-Seventies' terms, it does nonetheless insist on

the intensity and beauty of homosexual desire.—Richard Dyer.

THE TESTAMENT OF ORPHEUS (*Le Testament d'Orphée*). Director: Jean Cocteau. France. 1960. With: Jean Cocteau, Edouard Dermit, Henri Cremieux. Black and white. English subtitles. 83 mins. 16 mm print.

LOT IN SODOM. Directors: James Sibley Watson, Melville Webber. U.S.A., 1932. With: Frederick Haak, Hildegard Watson, Dorothea Haus. Black and white. Cert. X. 27 mins.

PINK FLAMINGOS

(May 11, 12, 14, 15)

'This "little treasure" from the underground cinema bursts on us like an explosion of flaming colours. Made by the John Waters of *Female Trouble* fame, the film has no pretensions whatever; its style goes against all the rules of good sense; its narrative covers every theme in the canon of the Unnameable, breaking, en route, social rules and taboos (incest, scatology, bloody and gratuitous murders) as it reaches a crescendo of black humour and bad taste. This fable of excess takes both pleasure and pride in showing everything that should not be shown. Its portrayal of crassness is presented as a contest between two rival groups for the title of the "filthiest person alive". On the one hand is Divine (present holder of the title), who has retired with her small family into a caravan guarded by pink flamingos; on the other, the Marvel couple with their bizarre red and blue hair and their trade in babies, who try vainly for the title. These two groups are surrounded by various unsavoury friends and enemies...' (From a review in *Positif*, No. 180, by Evelyne Caron-Lowins.)

(Director: John Waters. U.S.A., 1976. With: Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce, Mink Stole. Colour. Uncertified. 95 minutes.)

Supporting film:

GLEN OR GLENDA?

Tony Rayns wrote in *Time Out*: "Also known as *I Led Two Lives* or *I Changed my Sex*, *Glen or Glenda?* was promoted by its makers' undoubtedly sincere concern about the torrent of sensationalist reporting that greeted Christine Jorgensen's sex-change op. in 1952. They bring us the (true?) story of Glen, an outwardly normal, handsome, middle-class young man who is engaged to be married to a provocative blonde. In his private moments, however those furtive hours in front of the mirror, Glen becomes Glenda. His guilty secret is that he is a cross-dresser! That's right, *a transvestite*! Does he truly love Barbara, or just hanker after her form-hugging sweaters? Should he tell her about his other life, or risk her catching him in his undies? A kindly police inspector and a patient, helpful psychiatrist look into Glen's case, comparing and contrasting him with those unhappy souls for whom a change of clothes is not enough. And Bela Lugosi is on hand with his crystal ball and a cauldron of puppy dogs' tails to bring an existential perspective to bear on Glen's problems. A deeply moving plea for human understanding, years ahead of its time."

(Director: Edward G. Wood Jr. U.S.A., 1952. With: Bela Lugosi, Timothy Farrell, Daniel Davis. Black and white. 62 minutes. 16 mm.)

TOWN BLOODY HALL

(June 11)

"A record of a debate on the issues of women's liberation held under the aegis of the Theatre for Ideas, in New York's Town Hall on April 30, 1971. Novelist Norman Mailer chairs a panel consisting of feminist Germaine Greer, lesbian writer Jill Johnston, literary critic Diana Trilling and Jacqueline Ceballos, president of the New



'Nighthawks'

York chapter of NOW (the National Organisation for Women)...

"If Women's Liberation provides the ammunition...the actual battle in *Town Bloody Hall* seems to be taking place on some other ground. The opening speaker, Jacquelin Ceballos, is the only one who talks of a programme of actual social change (wages for housewives, marriage insurance, etc.). The debate otherwise has a distinctly literary cast: Germaine Greer's remarks on the tyranny that has been exercised by 'the masculine artist—the pinnacle of the masculine elite' foreshadow 'The Obstacle Race', while Norman Mailer's approach echoes his style of intellectual attack on many subjects..."—Richard Combs/*Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1980.

TOWN BLOODY HALL. Directors: D A Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus. U.S.A., 1979. With: Jacqueline Ceballos, Germaine Greer, Jill Johnston. Colour. Cert. A. 35 mins. 16 mm.

Supporting film:

SOME AMERICAN FEMINISTS

"*Some American Feminists* presents a historical perspective with some excerpts from early interview and newsreel footage of the tumultuous Sixties and Seventies: the Columbia University uprisings...the 1968 demonstrations against the *New York Times*...women protesting on Wall Street...the antagonistic crowds. These vociferous gatherings are interspersed with calm and determined interviews with the early leaders of the movement. Against the background of their own homes and other New York City locations, the women discuss—in a feminist context—issues of philosophy, art, anger, lesbianism and the politics of economics..."

"One of the areas the film explores is separatism. Rita Mae Brown broadly defines the issue—'What is called radical feminism, or separatism, is not a sexual separatism, but is a structure for women to find themselves, bound together as a strong force to change things' and then clarifies her own position and the complications within feminism itself: 'In the Movement I brought the (lesbian) issue up in '68 and you could hear the ovaries roll on the floor, so great was the shock at meetings. And I was bounced out of the National Organisation of Women, and later there was a lot of trouble in Red Stocking (which was at that time a radical group), because at that time people still had trouble with this issue. So myself and some other women formed Radical Lesbians, because the heterosexual women didn't want to work with us at that time'..."—The Other Cinema Catalogue.

SOME AMERICAN FEMINISTS. Film-makers: Luce Guilbeault, Nicole Brossard, Margaret Westcott. Canada, 1976. Colour. 56 mins. 16 mm.

WITCHES AND FAGGOTS—DYKES AND POOFTERS

(June 12)

Witches and Faggots—Dykes and Poofers is an extraordinary combination of historical data, interviews and live documentary footage (of the arrests in Mardi Gras week, Sydney 1978) which constantly makes connections between the oppression of gays and of women.

"Shot in colour, the film begins with a plotted world history of gay oppression and liberation. In medieval Europe, a commentator tells us (as stills recreate the scene on screen), one of the most accepted means of dealing with non-conformists was to call them witches. Eighty-five per cent of people so accused were women: these were burnt at the stake, with the bodies of male homosexuals used as faggots for the burnings. Such savagery links the causes of gays and women, another aim of the Collective's directors. But the most effective moments in *Witches and Faggots—Dykes and Poofers* are the newsreel scenes of cops clashing with gays on the streets of New South Wales and especially the individual histories of gays as seen in some (sadly brief) interviews..."—Jack Babuscio/*Gay News*.

WITCHES AND FAGGOTS—DYKES AND POOFTERS. Director: Digby Duncan. Australia, 1979. Colour. Uncertified. 45 mins. 16 mm.

Supporting film:

IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILDREN

"In Britain, the chances of winning custody or care of your children if you are a lesbian are slight. In the United States, too, lesbians are fighting for this right, and *In the Best Interests of the Children* is a film of their experience.

"In one custody case in New York, the judge stated: 'A woman has the right to be a lesbian, but lesbians don't have the right to raise children.' In the face of this bigotry, the clarity and honesty with which the eight lesbian mothers in this lesbian-made film speak of their experiences of fighting for custody and bringing up their children is remarkable. These interviews are set in the context of their every-day lives, and we see them shopping, working and playing with their children.

"A lawyer and a social worker who have done extensive work with lesbian mothers explain why they are sure these mothers should have the right to bring up their children. And, perhaps most striking of all, are the interviews with these children, whose open-mindedness and freshness of outlook are enviable..."—The Other Cinema Catalogue.

IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILDREN. Directors: Frances Reid, Elizabeth Stevens, Cath Zheutlin. U.S.A., 1977. Colour. Uncertified. 52 mins. 16 mm.

FILMS FOR PEACE VIEWING SESSION

(April 24)

This viewing session has been set up by the Arts Lab in conjunction with West Midlands CND. Our aim is to provide those working in the campaign for nuclear disarmament with a chance to see films which are not often shown, but which are of considerable value both in themselves and as instruments in the campaign. (When we were booking the films, a member of Concord Films Council—from which the majority of the films are available—expressed agreeable surprise that we did not wish to screen *The War Game* for the nth time!) The idea is that those attending the session will go on to use these films at meetings, discussions, etc.

The session will be divided into three parts. Part I will be devoted to films from the early days of the movement; Part II to films which might be termed 'consciousness-raising' films and/or those which suggest alternatives to the development of nuclear energy and weaponry (both of these sessions will contain short films and, for reasons of time, extracts

from longer films). In Part III we will screen two new films, *The Day After Trinity* and *Eight Minutes to Midnight: A Portrait of Dr Helen Caldicott*, both of which have been very kindly lent to us by Blue Dolphin Films.

Briefly, the timetable is as follows:

10.00 a.m.: Introductory talk.

10.30-12.30 p.m.: Screenings: *Direct Action at Harrington* (G.B., 1960), *Everyman I* (U.S.A., 1962), *Factory for Peace* (G.B., 1965), *Histoire du Soldat Inconnu* (Belgium, 1930, with later addition of soundtrack), *March To Aldermaston* (G.B., 1958).

12.30-1.30 p.m.: Lunch.

1.30 -3.15 p.m.: Screenings: *Attention* (Czechoslovakia, 1959), *Booom* (UN/Czechoslovakia 1979), *Lovejoy's Nuclear War* (U.S.A., 1975), *Nixon's Secret Legacy* (G.B./ATV, 1975), *Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang* (U.S.A., 1979), *We've Always Done It This Way* (G.B./ATV, 1978), *12-12-42 (Mimi's World)* (U.S.A., 1967), *Pretend*

You'll Survive (G.B./Leeds Animation Workshop, 1981).

3.15 p.m.: Coffee break.

3.30-6.00 p.m.: *The Day After Trinity*, an 88-minutes documentary on Robert Oppenheimer and the generation of scientists who developed the atom bomb, and *Eight Minutes to Midnight*, a 60-minutes portrait of the anti-nuclear activist Dr Helen Caldicott. Both films were shown at the 1981 London Film Festival.

The price of admission for the whole day (excluding lunch and coffee) is £2.00 (£1.00 unwaged). A leaflet will be available giving further details about the films and how they may be booked. For information meanwhile, please contact Marion Doyen at the Lab (tel. 021 359 2403).

We would like to thank Concord Films Council and Blue Dolphin Films for their generous help in setting up this viewing session.



THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR (La Femme d'à côté)

(May 2-4, 6-11, 13-15)

Director: François Truffaut.
France, 1981.

Script: François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman, Jean Aurel.

Photography: William Lubtchansky.

Music: Georges Delerue.

Leading Players: Gérard Depardieu (Bernard Coudray), Fanny Ardant (Mathilde Bauchard), Henri Garcin (Philippe Bauchard), Michèle Baumgartner (Arlette Coudray), Véronique Silver (Mme. Odile Jouve).

Fujicolor. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 106 minutes.

As Truffaut advances inexorably towards his target of thirty films, which he once claimed would make a reasonable output for a lifetime's work, the question arises as to whether he has lost all capacity for self-renewal. His previous film *The*

Last Metro, creaking under César awards and transatlantic publicity hype, met with a restrained reception in this country. Apart from the usual redeeming touches that grace any Truffaut film, it appeared as little more than a good, old-fashioned star vehicle for the talents of Catherine Deneuve, with a sympathetic performance by Gérard Depardieu thrown in for good measure. Not unpleasant but essentially soft-centred.

With *The Woman Next Door* Truffaut appears to have tried to repeat the formula and the results are less than happy. Given his fascination with portraying obsessive passions, in films such as *The Bride Wore Black*, *Adèle H* and *The Green Room*, it is not difficult to see what attracted Truffaut to the subject of the present film. And presumably his decision to offer Fanny Ardant, who last year was starring in a French TV drama serial, her first screen role, as the eponymous heroine, was influenced by his similar gesture in the direction of Isabelle Adjani, who before *Adèle H* was known only as a stage actress. The problem is that Ardant is not merely not a budding Moreau or Deneuve, but she is not even an Adjani. It is not clear what Gérard Depardieu, whom Truffaut has retained for this film, once saw in her several years earlier, nor what he sees in her now. "Femme fatale"

material she may appear to Truffaut, whose camera follows her around devotedly, but these screen goddess qualities may well elude the majority of the audience. If, as in French seventeenth century classical tragedy, the action is shown at a point when passions have reached their height and crisis is imminent, then it is possible to dispense with detailed description of why A loves B who loves C who loves A etc. But if this contextualising is to be dispensed with, then the emotions depicted must be seen to be violent and the passions intense. If on the other hand it all amounts to little more than a tennis-club romance, then something somewhere has gone seriously wrong.

Bernard Coudray (Gérard Depardieu) and his wife Arlette (Michèle Baumgartner) live in a village near Grenoble. The pleasant blandness of their relationship is never explored by Truffaut, who seems interested in depicting only its superficial aspects, whereby they seem merely a conventional couple. The presence of their one son is purely decorative.

Their domestic harmony (à la *Bed and Board*) is disturbed by the sudden appearance in the village of Mathilde (Is it fanciful to see at this point the influence of Jacques Brel—"Mathilde est revenue"—and also in the refrain—"Ne me quitte pas"—just before the end?), an old flame of Bernard, played by the inappropriately named Fanny Ardant. By chance, she and her new old (i.e. recent but 'mature') husband have just taken the house next door.

Having thus set the scene Truffaut is now free to indulge in a series of gratuitous cinematic allusions. Mathilde is 'The Aviator's Wife'—though in fact her husband Philippe is really an air-traffic controller. But those who thought they were in for a Rohmer-style, subtle investigation of the nuances of human motivation, passion and guilt are rapidly disillusioned. For this is Truffaut territory, with male heroes seen from the female viewpoint as little boys playing games. So Bernard, like Bertrand in *The Man Who Loved Women* and Antoine Doinel in *Stolen Kisses* and *Bed and Board*, plays with his model boats.

Despite providing no explanation of the previous love affair between Bernard and Mathilde, and no investigation of either of their current marital relationships, Truffaut asks us to accept the uncontrollable nature of their torrid passion, which bubbles up unpredictably like some Icelandic geyser. Unfortunately, what follows frequently descends into melodrama and even farce. Mathilde tends to faint when overcome by emotion; Bernard beats her up in public in a desperate attempt to rekindle her waning passion for him at one point in their stop-go affair; the melodramatic situation of the two principals is encapsulated within an equally credibility-stretching sub-plot, involving the narrator Mme Jouve whose unrequited love led her to a botched suicide attempt, an existence as a cripple and a masochistically courageous refusal to burden her lover with the story or to see him again, when he

returns offering happiness twenty years later.

The film's dénouement, after Mathilde's psychiatric treatment, owes much to *The Bride Wore Black*, though lacking the skilfully intensified suspense and sense of inevitability and righteous revenge of that film; whereas here the final shooting seems insufficiently motivated and a trifle gratuitous.

Truffaut's last really flimsy film, *A Gorgeous Bird Like Me*, was followed by the triumphant celebration of cinema that was *Day for Night*. A similar consummation after *The Woman Next Door* is devoutly to be wished.

Don Allen

THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Many of Truffaut's films deal with love relationships involving three characters and posit the notion that the 'problem' of such triangular affairs cannot be resolved. If the spectator believed that Truffaut had finally come to terms with this issue at the end of *The Last Metro* (1980), then the ambiguity of the closing shots was not perceived. Love/passion and communication were no more compatible in that film than they were in *Jules and Jim* (1960). Nor are they any better bed-fellows in *The Woman Next Door*, which is demonstrated by the inability of the two impassioned lovers (Mathilde and Bernard) to establish verbal contact—as, for example, when they both telephone each other at the same time and cannot get through.

In some respects, Truffaut's new film is like *Jules and Jim* in colour. This time, though, the narrative line is presented in the form of a flashback, and it is partly because of this that the frenetic passion which leads to destruction is more suffocating and devastating here than in the earlier film. *The Woman Next Door* begins and ends with an aerial shot, the only 'free' shot in the film. The prevailing shots in between show the main characters—including the respective husband and wife of Mathilde and Bernard—cornered or cramped in rooms, caged in tennis courts, and trapped in gloomy underground car parks. The characters are imprisoned by a fatal passion which has been re-ignited by a curious twist of Fate: Mathilde and her husband move into the vacant house opposite the home of Bernard (Mathilde's former lover) and his wife. At first Bernard refuses to acknowledge his past, but then, driven by an uncontrollable force, he 'goes down into the underworld' like Orpheus to reclaim his Eurydice. Again like Orpheus, he cannot resist looking at his love, and when he kisses Mathilde (in the underground car-park), he becomes as if blinded by passion. This kiss of doom ties the two lovers ineluctably together. Their passionate involvement rises, phoenix-like from the ashes of their first affair, to a level of madness which is almost Racinean in its morbid melancholia and plunges the couple towards their inevitable destruction.

The reference to Racine is not without intent, for this film is, formalistically, much like Racine's classical tragedy *Phèdre*, where the main and sub plots are closely entwined around the central theme of fatal passion. In this context, the important character Mme. Jouve (who tells the 'story' of the film) is the Racinean confidante whose experience and wisdom cannot save the lovers from their particular destiny, but whose own story serves as a cruel reminder that anyone can become crippled should they fall prey to a love that is governed by Fate rather than by free-will.

The tonal quality of the shots in this film is quite extraordinary. The images become almost tactile and one has a strong sense of the physicality of Mathilde and Bernard. The colour of her clothing and the décor which surround her render Mathilde, by association, as timeless as the Renaissance painting which is suspended near her telephone. (Ironically, the painting depicts a man and a woman struggling against one another.) Like her counterpart Catherine in *Jules and Jim*, Mathilde is the ideal woman, the ultimately unattainable. Furthermore, the object of her desire is equally unobtainable on earth. Paradoxically, she is on this occasion the unwilling harbinger of chaos who cannot obtain a harmony between peace of mind and passion, except through death.

Susan Hayward

OVERLOOKED OR UNDERRATED



Isabelle Huppert and Kris Kristofferson in 'Heaven's Gate'

HEAVEN'S GATE

(April 8-13)

Director: Michael Cimino.
U.S.A., 1980.

Script: Michael Cimino.
Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond.

Music: 'The Blue Danube Waltz' by Johann Strauss Jr. (performed by Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra), 'Mamou Two Step' by Doug Kershaw.

Leading Players: Kris Kristofferson (*James Averill*), Christopher Walken (*Nathan D. Champion*), Isabelle Huppert (*Ella Watson*), John Hurt (*William C. Irvine*), Sam Waterston (*Frank Canton*), Jeff Bridges (*John H. Bridges*), Joseph Cotton (*Reverend Doctor*), Brad Dourif (*Mr Eggleston*). Technicolour/Scope. Certificate X. 148 minutes (cut from 205).

Contrary to its reputation, *Heaven's Gate* is not the white elephant of the new Hollywood: more its Great White Whale. After its disastrous reception in America, the film's original running time was cut by over an hour, and, as with many slimming programmes, this seems to have distorted its natural shape: the prologue looks too elaborate, the epilogue too concise. The rest is magnificent.

Cimino's previous film was *The Deer Hunter* and one can sense the same hand at work here in the leisurely evocation of community, the sympathetic observation of male relationships, and a pervasive atmosphere of tension and incipient violence. But the period of *Heaven's Gate* is the 1880s not the 1970s and the war this time is not in Vietnam but in Wyoming between cattlemen and immigrants. Cimino was savagely attacked for allegedly distorting historic events to rig his argument, which overlooks the fact that he is making a western not a documentary and that, by analogy, one would not sensibly attack Shakespeare's *Henry V* for giving an unhistorical significance to the Battle of Agincourt. A recent article in *Montly Film Bulletin* suggests anyway that Cimino's portrait has more authenticity than some critics-cum-historians gave him credit for.

The film's main relationships are developed against the background of the Johnson County War. Kris Kristofferson's Marshal and John Hurt's alcoholic are friends from Harvard who

now find themselves fighting on opposite sides, the former supporting the immigrants, the latter an uneasy ally of the cattlemen. Kristofferson is also in conflict with Christopher Walken's hired gunman over the local madame (Isabelle Huppert) whom they both love.

The opening scenes at Harvard might invite comparison with *Chariots of Fire* in their similarly intense sense of national spirit. But *Heaven's Gate* is angry, not nostalgic, and its investigation of historical change is not uplifting but deeply disillusioned. Presentiments of this feeling are given when Joseph Cotten's moralistic sermon to the graduates is disrupted, Cotten himself now resembling an aged icon of Americana, an expressive relic from *Citizen Kane*. Also the campus dance, in its rendering of a Viennese waltz at a new world tempo ('The Blue Danube' performed by Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic), anticipates the whole theme of the immigrants having to adjust to an alien American beat.

The characters seem less individuals than abstractions of the American Dream. Kristofferson and Hurt represent the wealthy educated Americans of a century ago whose youthful libertarian ideals are to be eroded by their own cynical pragmatism and weakness of will, and by a rampant spirit of icy commercialism, embodied with superb malevolence by Sam Waterston as the cattlemen's leader. Walken represents the man of the wilderness attempting to come to terms with a new civilisation and whose dreams of integration and domesticity—the reference to Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* is beautifully suggestive—are to be consumed by fire.

Heaven's Gate is profoundly ambivalent about the American Dream (and, as a director, Cimino has always had the courage of his confusions). The film sometimes recalls John Ford in much of its detail—the loving creation of period, the dances that ritualise communal harmony, the sentimental attitude to women. But equally it has the hallmark of the harsher modern westerns of directors like Altman and Penn, who use the form not to celebrate America's pioneering past but to question its present through a critical look at its history and heritage. About the death-throes of the West, *Heaven's Gate* is also a comprehensive summation of the '70s Western, the ultimate demythologising of the form which implicitly criticises the genre's tendency to racism and undermines the efficacy of the Western hero.

The flaws of the film have been thoroughly

discussed. The plotting and characterisation are sometimes confusing, and Cimino's skilful use of structural motifs and rhyming sequences and images does not entirely compensate for a lack of narrative energy. Against these, one can set the film's stunning design and photography and some passages of stupendous vividness and power. The grandeur of its conception and the seriousness of its themes make most other recent Hollywood films look paltry and irrelevant, and the restoration of a complete version of the film must be an urgent priority for the modern film historian. To cut a work with the genuine epic vision of a *Heaven's Gate* is not artistic pruning but aesthetic vandalism.

Neil Sinyard

SWEET REVENGE (Dandy, the All-American Girl)

(May 16-18)

Director: Jerry Schatzberg.
U.S.A., 1976.
Script: B.J. Perla, Marilyn Goldin. Based on a story by B.J. Perla.
Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond.
Music: Paul Chihara.
Leading Players: Stockard Channing (*Vurrla "Yee" Kowsky*), *"Dandy Cochran"* ("Jenny Maxwell"), Sam Waterston (*Philip Le Clerq*), Franklyn Ajaye (*Edmund*), Richard Doughty (*Andy*), Norman Matlock (*John*).
Metrocolor/Scope. Certificate AA. 89 minutes (cut from 90).

The original title—*Dandy, the All-American Girl*—made more sense but no impact at the all-American box-office, with the result that the film got discreetly overlooked by MGM. Surfacing in the U.K. only by the narrowest of margins some three years later, it has continued to flicker in a kind of distribution limbo, uncertain as to whether or not it has ever been shown to anybody, or ever will be. Even the fresh new title, conceived as more seductive to British ears, contrives to add further obscurities; it refers to the fur-lined limousine owned by the heroine's black collaborator, which turns out to be more of a sour sacrifice than a social upheaval. If the 'revenge' of the title has any relevance at all it is, with calculated irony, far from sweet. "Was that absolutely necessary?" comes the question as the all-American girl contemplates her finest hour. "No," comes the reply, "but it's a nice touch."

Schatzberg's interest, to judge from *Panic in Needle Park*, *Scarecrow*, and most recently *Honeysuckle Rose*, is with the borderland between respectability and vagrancy, that wide swathe of social dusk encircling American society in which shadowy figures engage in guerilla conflict with the law, emerging occasionally to enjoy the advantages of hard-won wealth but more often, like the dispossessed of Italian cinema in the late 1950s, to scorn convention and retreat further into the darkness. The anti-hero has become so familiar a figure, in fact, the cop-turned-felon-turned-cop-again so habitual a symbol, that Schatzberg's proponent Dandy in *Sweet Revenge* has the mere wayward charm of a delinquent teenager rather than the menace of any kind of challenge to the petro-dollar economy. Even for her time, she was a bit of a clown, like Fellini's indomitable Giulietta whom she occasionally resembles; five years later, she's even more like a poor little rich kid temporarily short of funds.

Dandy has plenty of pseudonyms, an impressive roster of minor misdemeanours for which the police are hard on her heels, an incredulous young lawyer who finds her mildly fascinating, and an all-American dream. Her heart is set on a Dino Ferrari sports car, black, sleek, classy, and around \$20,000. To get it, she steals and sells lesser cars, several times, while the funds mount up, the casual boy-friend gets disgusted ("Some car thief! Always needs a ride..."), the lawyer gives up hope, and the true outsider, her black pal Edmund, gives all he's got to back her up. Pursuing her objective, she is (like the Amy Irving character in *Honeysuckle Rose*) obsessive, creative, amoral, and—finally—educated. Renunciation and capitulation take place at the dawn of a new day, and we might just believe, for the sake of convenience, that henceforth Dandy will espouse a legal existence as not particularly interestingly personified by Sam Waterston. It is also convenient, of course, to

believe that the flame of revolt still burns in there somewhere.

Not to be too heavy about it, *Sweet Revenge* deserves to be better known and better liked, but it's a bitter, little, and brittle comedy and Stockard Channing (rather than the Ferrari) works hard to make it work. Her catch-phrase "Catch you later", the refrain underpinning the film's message, is augmented by an appealing range of unglamorous mugging; the face looks like dough of the unprofitable variety, but she gets it to rise to any occasion, and eventually one forgets to look for resemblances to Elizabeth Taylor. And one wonders why she (unlike Schatzberg) hasn't sauntered amiably on into even pleasanter achievements.

Philip Strick



LIGHT YEARS AWAY

(May 20-22)

Director: Alain Tanner.
France/Switzerland, 1981.
Script: Alain Tanner. Based on the novel *La Voie sauvage* by Daniel Odier.
Photography: Jean-François Robin.
Music: Arié Dzierlatka.
Leading Players: Trevor Howard (*Yoshka Poliakov*), Mick Ford (*Jonas*), Odile Schmitt (*Dancer*), Louis Samier (*Man in Truck*), Joe Pilkington (*Thomas*).
Eastman Colour. English dialogue. Certificate AA. 107 minutes.

Among other things, this strange and fascinating new film by Alain Tanner challenges received opinions about its director's work being mainly concerned with "probing the conscience of Swiss society" and exhibiting an unmistakable political commitment. *Light Years Away* is based on a science fiction/fantasy novel by Daniel Odier, which Tanner has located in a 'timeless' Irish landscape and filmed in English with a cast headed by British actors Trevor Howard and Mick Ford. That the year is 2000 and that the central protagonist is a 25-year-old named Jonas immediately suggest a strong connection with Tanner's earlier film *Jonas, Who will be 25 in the Year 2000*. But the new film is not so easily pigeon-holed and confirms a move on the part of this filmmaker towards a more abstract—and thus more politically ambiguous—form of cinema.

Ford plays an unsettled young city man who is lured by Howard's old eccentric to the latter's ramshackle garage/workshop situated on a deserted road. A master/servant, father/son

relationship develops between the two men, with the younger one willingly submitting himself to a series of seemingly pointless tasks and trials (manning a dry petrol pump, rearranging and polishing a pile of scrap cars, catching an eagle, etc.) in the hope of learning his elder's secret. That secret turns out to be the ability to fly, which the Howard character has spent years learning from his study of birds.

With its reference to the Icarus myth and its heavily mystical tone, *Light Years Away* definitely marks a shift in Tanner's approach from the days of such politically committed works as *Return from Africa* and *Jonas*. "Looking back," Tanner explained to Martyn Auty in a *Time Out* interview, "I think that our generation was perhaps wrong to deny the metaphysical dimension of man and to insist that everything was political. If we failed to change the social order—during or after May 1968—maybe we should be looking in other directions. This is why I was drawn to the idea of filming Daniel Odier's book." David Robinson has accurately summed up the result as "a fable about learning and teaching and spiritual aspiration, a mixture of myth and fairy tale, of Homer and Hop-o'-Thumb."

If the dialogue of *Light Years Away* is often vague and its ideas sometimes suspect, then it must be observed that the film is extraordinarily precise in terms of its images and performances. Tanner's feeling for the beauty of the physical world was especially evident in *Messidor* and *The Middle of the World*. Here he seems to have found a perfect setting in the west of Ireland, with its rugged landscape and the magical quality of its light. "I worked outwards from these physical things," Tanner has said. "The whole film was constructed in this way . . . the formidable inspiration which comes from the colour of the sky at a given moment, from the colour of the shed, from that marvellous breakdown truck with its incredible noise and its red colour, from the faces of the actors. . ."

He also seems to have found the perfect actors in Trevor Howard and Mick Ford, who give appropriately physical performances and lend a simplicity and conviction to dialogue that could easily have sounded ludicrously pretentious. One still has doubts about the film, and in particular about Tanner's suggestion that his young hero's spiritual enlightenment is occasioned by his acceptance of discipline and an unthinking submission to the whims of a cranky old father figure. A second viewing might dispel such doubts, and I must admit to having seen *Light Years* during a crowded day's viewing that also took in Claude Goretta's *A Girl from Lorraine*. It was interesting to find the latter director uncharacteristically piling on social significance and Tanner, the supposedly 'committed' one of the two, attempting a return to basics. In this last respect, the film that *Light Years* reminded me of most was by yet another Swiss director: *Slow Motion* by Jean-Luc Godard.

Peter Walsh





TRUE CONFESSIONS

(May 23—25, 27—29)

Director: Ulu Grosbard.

U.S.A., 1981.

Script: John Gregory Dunne, Joan Didion.

Based on the novel by John Gregory Dunne.

Photography: Owen Roizman.

Music: Georges Delerue.

Leading players: Robert De Niro (*Des Spellacy*),

Robert Duvall (*Tom Spellacy*), Charles Durning

(*Jack Amsterdam*), Kenneth McMillan (*Frank*

Crotty), Ed Flanders (*Dan T. Campion*), Cyril

Cusack (*Cardinal Danaher*).

Colour. Certificate AA. 108 minutes.

True Confessions is a curious example of the interlocking realms of movie-making, theatre, and high pressure publishing: director Ulu Grosbard is in fact primarily a stage director whose film credits are uneven (*Straight Time*) when they're not actually disastrous (*Who is Harry Kellerman and Why Is He Saying These Terrible Things About Me?*). Robert De Niro is the great male movie star to have arrived in the '70s, and his pairing opposite Robert Duvall re-unites them in a partnership that began on *The Godfather*. And John Gregory Dunne's novel, on which the film is based, is only the last in a series of books which he and his wife Joan Didion have written either about or around Hollywood and its myths (*The White Album*, *The Studio*). Surprisingly, despite this phenomenal triangular 'package' (as perfect as anything described or decried by Dunne in his writing on the movie business), *True Confessions* has failed at the box-office.

To begin at the beginning, *True Confessions* is a detective story without a conclusion, a deliberately modernist thriller wearing Bogart clothes but talking a modern language of explicit sex, political cynicism, and moral doubt. Robert Duvall, weatherbeaten and edgy, is the L.A. cop whose investigation of a torso killing and whose renewed acquaintance with brothel owner Brenda Samuels (Rose Gregorio, wife of director Ulu Grosbard) leads him to suspect prominent building contractor, Catholic pillar and ex-vice boss Jack Amsterdam, of the murder. De Niro is Duvall's brother, a smooth-cheeked, ambitious, compromised clergyman gunning for his own bishopric in the hierarchy presided over by the ailing and ruthless Cardinal Danaher (Cyril Cusack). Amsterdam, it soon becomes clear, has a long history of 'good works' for the mother

church, offering apparently irresistible estimates on contracts to build hospitals and schools. When Duvall threatens the easy, corrupt life of the contractor with circumstantial evidence that connects him to the sex killing, De Niro's career is destroyed. Which brother, we are asked to judge, as if in some moral fable, was more godly — the blasphemous, venal cop with a stubborn streak of obstinacy and bitter pride, or the quiet Jesuitical diplomat working in the corrupt world to better the lot of the Church and its children?

Put in that way, the crux of *True Confessions* is pat and sententious, splitting ethical hairs and forcing its audience into a debate every bit as morally dubious as the self-deceptions of Duvall and De Niro. But the heart of the movie lies elsewhere, and may explain its failure to please mass audiences. Precisely because the film leads to no urgent climax, and because it has vastly simplified the dense and suffocating web of the novel, it leaves to its actors a generous allowance of time simply to act (and the result occasionally looks like conventional art movie aesthetics). De Niro (who at the time of shooting was recovering from the huge weight gain required by Scorsese's *Raging Bull*) and Robert Duvall play every variant on snap-brim hats and character roles that you can remember from '40s films: the eyebrow tilted at the hat check girl; the sardonic smile; the lighting of a cigarette drawn out into elaborate ritual. These pieces of theatrical business, far more than the moral theme, become the subject of the film. And in its hazy, sprawling way, so does Los Angeles itself, admirably photographed by Owen Roizman (cinematographer on *The Electric Horseman* and *Straight Time*). *True Confessions* in that sense is not 'about' moral and political integrity, nor even about the specific dilemmas of a Catholic conscience. Its primary subject is Hollywood itself.

In detail, the case of *True Confessions* gets even stranger. In outline a detective story, this is a film in which not a single shot is fired, and in which the detective's fascination with the dead girl's body and the twisted memories which it evokes are far more important than any present emotions (so much so in fact, that the guilty, adulterous affair of the Robert Duvall character, which is central to the novel, has been completely cut from the screenplay). Without any semblance of romantic interest to justify it, sex has simply become an economic token in the operation of the City: from the brothel where the movie opens, and the disfigured body of the girl,

murdered during the shooting of a blue movie, to the coolly vicious dialogue, Los Angeles is displayed as a metropolis of vice, a city with a tainted history.

True Confessions opens with a wedding party whose icing-cake purity disguises the property deals and Tammany Hall politics that are in progress — the scene comes straight from *The Godfather*. And Duvall's mute, almost completely repressed memories of serving in the vice squad downtown (memories which provoke his loathing for Jack Amsterdam) come to him out of the past like the whiff of Chinatown in *Chinatown*. From the Polanski/Robert Towne film, too, comes the idea of Los Angeles as a garden city, an Eden whose developers brought in the mob to help them clean up. Unlike the '40s thrillers on which it seems to be modelled, *True Confessions* has no gangsters — only property sharks and fixers. Jack Amsterdam is no longer a mobster; he has fully graduated to civic politics. The conclusion is inescapable: *True Confessions* is not a natural heir to those 'tec movies of the '40s and '50s on which its acting is based, but comes directly out of the sourer climate of the '70s — from movies like *Chinatown* (1974), and *The Long Goodbye* (1973), which were themselves already ruminations on the earlier films. *The Godfather* had come out even earlier (1971). *True Confessions* (the novel) was published in America only in 1977. That chronology isn't meant to suggest plagiarism, but reflection, a cross-fertilization from film to novel and back again that one should have expected anyway, given the potency of fables like *Chinatown* and the position of Dunne as a writer who has spent so much time observing Hollywood at close quarters.

The experience of watching *True Confessions* now becomes clearer: Ulu Grosbard's willingness to give the actors all that space confers on the movie a frame-by-frame texture which is delightfully full; while the fact that the film is not a re-working of social actuality, nor even of the '40s films, but of the '70s movies which contemplated the *innocence* of those earlier fables, gives it a curiously bleached tone. The achievement may be 'accidental', but *True Confessions* is, on the one hand, as ripe and dense as Old Hollywood film-making, and, on the other, more truly hollowed out by cynicism than any of the '70s epics of private corruption, local politics and organised crime which preceded it. That contradiction doesn't make it great — but the movie comes surprisingly close, even though, directorially, it's on auto-pilot most of the time.

Chris Auty

RETURN OF THE SECAUCUS SEVEN

(May 30-June 1)

Director: John Sayles.
U.S.A., 1979
Script: John Sayles.
Photography: Austin DeBesche.
Music: Guy Van Duser, Bill Staines, Timothy Jackson, Mason Daring.
Leading Players: Bruce MacDonald (*Mike Donnelly*), Adam Lefevre (*J.T.*), Gordon Clapp (*Chip Hollister*), Karin Trott (*Maura Tolliver*), David Strathairn (*Ron Desjardins*), Marsia Smith (*Carol*).
Colour. Certificate A. 100 minutes.

John Sayles' film is a perfect example of how production background can inform criticism, even when the lack of language barriers and apparent simplicity of film language seem to make it unnecessary. Seen in New York at an afternoon matinee, the audience joined in with cheers and laughs; some spoke along with the dialogue, having clearly seen the film several times before—by that stage (spring 1981) this low-budget movie was already a cult and critical success in both Boston and New York. But in Britain the reaction was more respectful, and tinged with puzzlement, the symptom of a cultural barrier that couldn't be seen or heard but was clearly affecting the audience.

Return of the Secaucus Seven was shot for 70,000 dollars during the course of a summer using a close-knit group of friends and acquaintances around director/script writer/actor John Sayles and unit manager/actor Maggie Renzi. In outline the film is simplicity itself—a small group of friends, now in their 30s, meet for an annual reunion weekend in the New Hampshire mountains. Their occasion for meeting like this is the night they all spent together in jail some ten years before, when arrested on their way to an anti-Vietnam war rally. Hence the Secaucus Seven. A decade on, they are loosely politicised members of the young East Coast bourgeoisie: Mike and Kate are teachers; Frances a trainee doctor; Irene and her new straight-ish boyfriend work for a senator as speech-writers. Over the weekend they play basketball, flirt, swim, eat, go to a play, and—to crown an initially awkward reunion—get arrested on suspicion of a misdemeanour. On paper at least, it looks like *Alice's Restaurant* a decade on.

In practice, the effect is rather more complex. In his novels and short stories, Sayles has displayed a dry irony about American forms of political activism (most wittily in *The Anarchists' Convention*) which may owe something to his own blue collar experience. And *Secaucus Seven* occasionally displays that temperament—in moments of dialogue, in the fact that Irene and her boyfriend both now work for The System, and, most obviously, in the fact that the second arrest of the Secaucus Seven (minus one) is an occasion for fond memories and renewed companionship and nothing much more. But more important than the film's specifically American nostalgia, the main obstacle to our seeing the film freshly is the European political legacy of the '70s, from the Provos to Baader-Meinhof. How could the British generation equivalent of Sayles' characters recollect 1968 in anything like such weekend tranquility? To do so would in itself be some sort of political statement—a confession of moving to the right and into complacency. To recall '68 more politically would involve a difficult struggle, to choose some kind of place in the fragmented and guilty current political landscape—with women's politics? with autonomist and armed factions? with the new-old-upside-down Labour party? Perhaps if it had been made under the Reagan administration, *Secaucus Seven* would have been a very different film, but one doubts it: the sense of intellectual distance from politics and the impression of personal growth which allows the movie to enjoy its happy affections is a very American (Romantic, Jeffersonian) impulse, and a very deep-rooted one.

If the film seems politically slightly blurred to European eyes, it's also, cinematically, a teaser. The way it was made—the East Coast intelligentsia filming its collective diary—suggests that it belongs to a kind of 'intellectual party' film tradition that stretches from Robert Frank's *Pull My Daisy* through Warhol to some of the current

New York independents (Mark Rappaport et al). But that couldn't be further from the truth: Sayles' film is technically self-effacing and its movement comes from actors building very lived-in characters—no pyrotechnics, no histrionics, no camp here. Nor, though, does *Secaucus Seven* fit in easily with Sayles' increasingly successful screen-writing career on Corman-style B-movies (*Piranha*, *The Lady in Red*, *Battle Beyond the Stars*, *The Howling*, and most recently *Alligator*). With the exception of *Lady in Red*, which tried to rework the Dillinger/Depression story within a socialist and feminist panorama, the films on which he's worked have been articulate and humorous pieces of pastiche: monster movies (*Alligator*, *Piranha*); horror (*The Howling*); even a jokey hybrid of tin can science fiction with the plot of *The Seven Samurai* (*Battle Beyond the Stars*). They are films overshadowed by superficiality, by a great technical ingenuity which permits them not to engage with anything very serious. In that light, the warmth and muddle of *Return of the Secaucus Seven* should reassure us that John Sayles is, potentially, a great film-maker.

Chris Auty



TWO STAGE SISTERS (Wutai Jiemei)

(June 10-12)

Director: Xie Jin.
China, 1964.
Script: Lin Gu, Xu Jin, Xie Jin.
Photography: Zhou Daming.
Music: Huang Zhun.
Leading Players: Xie Fang (*Chunhua*), Cao Yindi (*Yeuhong*), Feng Ji (*Xing*), Gao Yuansheng (*Jiang Bo*), Shen Fengjuan (*Xiao Xiang*), Xu Caigen (*Jin Shui*).
Colour. English subtitles. Certificate U. 114 minutes.

Made in 1964 in China's Shanghai studios, *Two Stage Sisters* was suppressed during the Cultural Revolution, purportedly because of its 'formalism' and for its sympathetic treatment of the 'bad' sister. It reappeared in 1979 and was hailed in the West as a major discovery, winning a special award from the British Film Institute in 1981.

In some quarters, the film has been received as nothing more (and nothing less) than Sirk with a sarong. It is a rags-to-riches drama about two acting sisters whose fates drastically diverge. For one the theatre becomes a platform for political commitment, whilst the other is seduced by the bright lights and uses her charms to exploit the patronage of men. One seeks to change society: the other to make her way in it, as far as possible on her own terms. Tension between the two women grows, and it results in one of them being implicated in a crime against the other.

Although the theatrical background and the

dramatic courtroom scene might evoke classic Hollywood melodramas such as *Madame X* and *Imitation of Life*, the American film it resembles most is probably that great gangster film of the Thirties, *Marked Woman*. This film also set up a stark contrast between two sisters and between country and city; also had a scene in which one of the women is disfigured and a trial scene which brings the issues to a climax. What *Two Stage Sisters* particularly shares with *Marked Woman* is a determination to make the situation of the women not simply a subject for emotional display but for social criticism.

Part of the interest of *Two Stage Sisters* lies in its feminist theme. The men in the film tend to be oppressors and manipulators who see women as commodities for their benefit: one man even refers to one of the sisters as 'the last of my capital'. But the film goes a little further than merely pointing this out as a form of social abuse, for it becomes an essential element in the film's political debate. Men represent the old order: it is the women who discuss and attempt to achieve revolutionary change.

The potential of melodrama as a progressive genre—in its foregrounding of the situation of women, its critique of the bourgeois family, its exposure of the hollowness of materialism—has been an important aspect of critical debate on film over the last few years. But this element of 'subversion' in the classic melodrama is generally felt beneath the surface of the films. Very few Western melodramas have spelt out their political implications as overtly as *Two Stage Sisters*. Indeed the ending—where the two sisters are reconciled and they vow to perform 'only revolutionary operas'—has been rather derided, the director himself allegedly unhappy about its bluntness. Perhaps the conclusion does seem a little unsubtle in comparison with what has gone before, where the acknowledged necessity for change—the old order giving way to the new—has not erased the perception that in some cases the process might be painful. (This is symbolised in the fate of the older actress who is displaced as a leading performer by the two stage sisters and also displaced by one of them as the boss's mistress.) But, however hastily contrived, the ending seems true to the overall political thrust of the film.

There is a wonderful opening travelling shot which seems to be heading towards the theatrical performance but actually stops short in the busy streets—an immediate clue that the film's concern is not with how society responds to the travelling players but how the theatrical troupe are going to project and direct their performances to the issues of society. If all this sounds a little heavy, it should be insisted that *Two Stage Sisters* offers all the pleasures of a typical film melodrama: sensitivity to colour, fluent camerawork, rich ironies of structure and intense imagery. Its depiction of the claustrophobia of theatrical life is fascinating because of its reworking of traditional ingredients within an unusual context. The film has been called 'the apex of thirty years of popular left-wing Chinese cinema', and part of its importance is its generic boldness. The potential radicalism of melodrama is, for once, openly espoused.

Neil Sinyard



A GIRL FROM LORRAINE (La Provinciale)

(June 17-22)

Director: Claude Goretta.
France/Switzerland, 1980.
Script: Claude Goretta, Jacques Kirsner, Rosine Rochette.
Photography: Philippe Rousselot, Dominique Bringuier.
Music: Arie Dzierlatka.
Leading Players: Nathalie Baye (Christine), Angela Winkler (Claire), Bruno Ganz (Remy), Dominique Patrel (Ralph), Roland Monod (Bernier), Jean Obé (Thabert).
Eastman colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA.
112 minutes.

Claude Goretta's new film seems designed both as a companion piece to his earlier success *The Lace-maker* (*La Dentellière*, 1976) and as a vehicle for the talents of French actress Nathalie Baye, who scored a hit with her not dissimilar role in Bertrand Tavernier's *Une Semaine de vacances* (*A Week's Holiday*, 1980). These associations are probably sufficient in themselves to guarantee some interest in *La Provinciale*, which is a more ambitious but less successful film than *The Lace-maker*. The new film definitely assumes a greater relevance when viewed in the light of the director's earlier work, especially *The Lace-maker*, which provides a useful starting point for a consideration of Goretta's concerns and methods as a film-maker.

Based on a novel by Pascal Lainé, *The Lace-maker* presented a sympathetic portrait of a shy and withdrawn young woman (played by Isabelle Huppert) who slowly drifts into isolation and mental illness after having an unsuccessful affair with a student whose social and intellectual interests she cannot share. Goretta has explained that what attracted him to Lainé's novel was its sense of incommunicability: "this problem of the incommunicability between two people who are unable to love each other because they do not express themselves in the same way." The film subtly developed this theme through both its central and minor characters to build up an affecting picture of frustrated relationships born out of class differences and an unfortunate tendency for people to conform to emotionally restricting norms. The image of modern human relationships presented in the film was one of people being restricted (or 'boxed-in' as a character describes it in one of the film's key scenes), unable to express themselves, let alone find fulfilment.

The same theme was also present in Goretta's earlier film *The Invitation* (1973), a sharply observed comedy about a group of office workers whose social façades begin to crumble during the course of a celebratory week-end party thrown by one of their number. As in *The Lace-maker*, the central character of *The Invitation* is a simple and gentle creature who is an outsider by virtue of being unable to play the social game to his advantage. Both characters are presented as 'innocents' who are unable to communicate their feelings and end up as sad victims of what Goretta clearly sees as a general social malaise.

Goretta's great strength as a film-maker is his ability to capture the inner feelings of ordinary and inarticulate characters whose potentialities are stifled in a drab and mechanistic world. The success of his films depends to a large degree on the emphasis they place on the specialness and innocence of their protagonists. This has caused his critics to accuse Goretta of "simply waving the flag of *la condition humaine*", and from a radical perspective this criticism is difficult to refute. Yet it remains true that the films have an important social dimension, and Goretta is right when he says that he "always mixes the sociological, the problems of society, and the personal problems of people."

This brings us to *La Provinciale* itself, a film which potentially provides a richer mixture of social and personal problems than any of his previous features. There is, to begin with, the predicament of the heroine, Christine, a 31-year-old draughtswoman who loses her job in her home town of Lorraine when the firm she works for closes down—a victim of the recession. The optimistic and independent-minded Christine decides to move to Paris, where she lives alone in a lonely flat and begins to look for a job. Her first



interview ends with her storming out after the prospective employer makes a crude pass. She soon resigns herself to accepting temporary jobs, and makes the acquaintance of Remy, a married Swiss man who is temporarily in Paris on a management course. They have an affair which ends when Christine turns down the man's proposal that she accompany him on a one-year business assignment in Tokyo. Another one-off job brings her into contact with Claire, an aspiring actress who resorts to casual prostitution in order to support her two children. Unwilling to compromise her principles, and with her prospects in Paris looking no brighter, Christine is finally pleased to return to Lorraine.

As the above outline makes clear, *La Provinciale* tells the familiar story of a country innocent who is threatened by the corruption of city life. Goretta, however, is not so much interested in preaching a facile moral as capturing what he describes as "the present climate of anguish and apprehension." His approach, once again, is to describe a contemporary malaise by concentrating on the plight of his central character and then elaborating his theme through the other protagonists. Unfortunately, the formula doesn't work nearly as well here as it did in *The Lace-maker*. This is partly because the characterization isn't as sharp as it was in the earlier film, and partly because Goretta has not found a sufficiently precise visual style to pin down the more abstract points he is trying to make about our alienated society.

There is still much that is interesting and to be admired in the new film, however. One welcomes, for example, the presence of a stronger, more positive Goretta heroine. Christine is clearly seen to draw strength from her home environment and has a far clearer idea about what she wants out of life than her counterpart in *The Lace-maker*. Typically, though, Goretta points to her vulnerability as she tentatively embarks on an affair with Remy and explains that she's afraid of being hurt by the relationship. But he also shows Christine to be perfectly aware of the limitation of Remy's proposal, which she describes as "making her a parenthesis in someone else's life." The couple are in fact drawn together through mutual loneliness, and their touching relationship is a very transitory affair. Goretta is concerned to show the inadequacies of the relationship without denying its beauty and value. As with the couple in *The Lace-maker*, communication between Christine and Remy is very limited, and each seems trapped by their own idealised vision of love. Like Beatrice in *The Lace-maker*, Christine has a portrait of her lover (an idealisation of the real person) which she keeps for a time after Remy's departure. Knowing of his imminent departure and their inevitable separation, Remy

tells her about fictional lovers "closing their eyes so that they wouldn't have to part." Later, in a very good scene at the airport, the couple have their photographs taken and are caught by Goretta in almost silent poses against moving escalators and electrically sliding doors, the surroundings suggesting that their chance of happiness is being denied by some inhuman mechanism.

This failed love story is merely one aspect of the film's disillusioned picture of contemporary urban life. Just as she fails to find a permanent lover, Christine also fails to find a permanent job. Her friend Claire is in a similar predicament, having to accept roles in stupid TV commercials as a substitute for her idea of a worthwhile acting career. "I'm wasting the best years of my life," Claire explains, "no money, no clothes, barely enough to eat, and kids flunking at school." Although Goretta shows the two women to benefit from their friendship, he also emphasises their very different ways of coping. Unlike Christine, Claire is willing to compromise, even to the extent of indulging in some casual prostitution in order to make ends meet.

The other characters with whom Christine comes into contact provide different examples of a general discontent. One of them, Pascal, is a successful architect who is a potential employer for Christine. He invites her to dinner one evening and she accompanies him to a series of dismal clubs on an all-night drinking spree. Pascal's problem, as he explains it, is that his wife has left him for another man, and there is a suggestion that this might be because of his devotion to his work. Despite his success, he is in a state of hopeless despair. Christine takes him home in an exhausted and drunken state and hides the revolver she finds in his bedroom. When she goes for her interview the following morning, however, she learns that the man has committed suicide by throwing himself out of the window.

Goretta's characters are usually unable to help each other out of difficulty. They tend to be very self-possessed and unable to communicate their feelings. Beatrice in *The Lace-maker* provides the most striking example, and that film charted a character's progress from shy vulnerability to complete isolation and retreat into self. *La Provinciale* is more optimistic in that here the heroine's 'retreat' (Christine's decision to return home) is seen as a positive move. The trouble with this 'positive' ending is that it doesn't convince one that Christine's personal victory provides any solution to "the present climate of anguish and apprehension." The particular and the general fail to coalesce. Goretta's film is still, however, 'serious and touching', to use one of his characters' description of Schubert's music.

Peter Walsh

BUSTER KEATON FESTIVAL

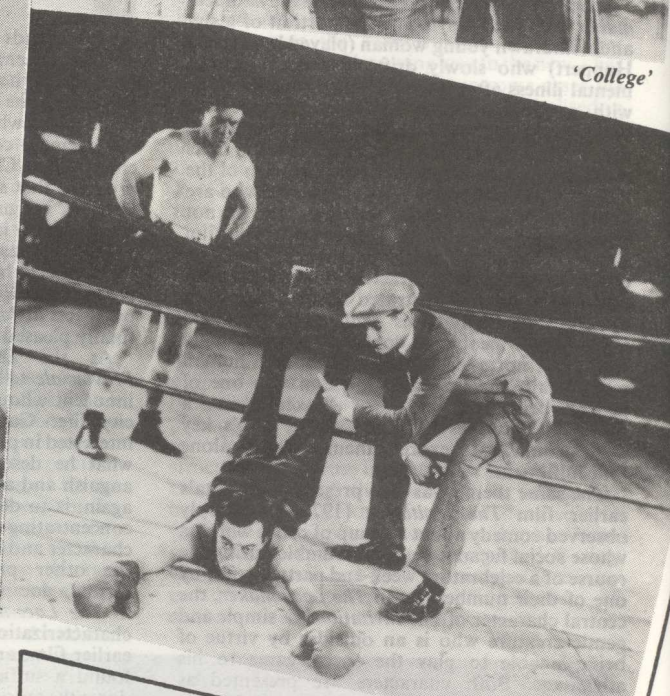
'Steamboat Bill Junior'



'College'



'Seven Chances'



'Battling Butler'

June 13-16, 15-30

This retrospective is being presented by arrangement with Raymond Rohauer. It consists of ten major features which Keaton made for his own production company (including such masterpieces of American silent cinema as *The General*, *Our Hospitality*, *Steamboat Bill Junior*, *The Navigator* and *Sherlock Junior*), all the available shorts made by his company, and three early shorts (*The Butcher Boy*, *Coney Island*, *The Bellboy*) made with Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle.

All the prints to be shown in the season will be in 35 mm. and of excellent quality. There will be live piano accompaniment (usually by Mr Richard McLaughlin) for all 8.30 p.m. performances, and taped music for the matinée and 6.15 p.m. shows. A special programme brochure giving further details of the season will be available shortly. Arts Lab members will receive this programme through the post. For a listing of titles and dates, please see the calendar at the centre of this programme.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CELLULOID CLOSET by Vito Russo.
Harper & Row/£7.95.

A major legacy of the social political movements of the Sixties and Seventies has been the realisation of the importance of representation. The political chances of different groups in society—powerful or weak, central or marginal—are crucially affected by how they are represented, whether in legal and parliamentary discourse, in educational practices, or in the arts. The mass media in particular have a crucial role to play, because they are a centralised source of definitions of what people are like in any given society. How a particular group is represented determines in a very real sense what it can do in society.

Not surprisingly, this concern with representation has come from subordinate groups—women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, the disabled and so on—groups who don't like the way they are represented and recognise it as part of the means by which they are kept in their subordinate place. Many of the important developments in film culture have reflected this essentially political concern with representation—indecent film-making, seasons such as recent ones at the Lab like 'Images of Motherhood', 'Madness in Cinema' and 'Looking at Prostitution', and books and articles looking at the way different groups have been and should be represented in film and television. Some of the latter writings have been concerned with theoretical or critical matters, but equally important have been those books that have attempted to survey a group's representation and thus, in large measure, its oppression. There have been several such books looking at women, Native Americans, and blacks, but Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet* is the first to do the same job for gays.

It is a remarkable achievement. In 246 fluently written pages, he covers a history of representation both richer and stretching further back than anyone could have supposed. If the films made in Germany in the Twenties were already widely acknowledged, it comes as something of a revelation to learn of a camp cowboy making eyes at Stan Laurel in the 1923 *The Soldiers*, or a sequence in a gay bar in a 1932 Clara Bow vehicle *Call Her Savage*. In fact, one of the things that emerges from the book is that there were more explicitly gay images in the '20s and early '30s than there were in the '30s and '40s, a period of much heavier censorship and a more normative social-moral code in general.

This barren period is particularly challenging for Vito Russo's project. How do you argue for a character being gay in this period when all of the signs of gayness that were used earlier are strictly eliminated and no direct reference to homosexuality is possible? The danger is of 'reading in' too much, seizing on the slightest hint of effeminacy in men or 'strangeness' in women as indicating that you're supposed to think they are gay. Vito Russo is particularly impressive here, sensitively reading such images in context to determine those that can reasonably be called gay and those that can't. Even so, there are some nicely provocative readings—Laurel and Hardy in *Their First Mistake* and Gus-Gus in Disney's *Cinderella* are all, very convincingly, shown to be infected in terms of homosexuality.

As the book comes up to date and the story becomes more familiar, Vito Russo traces carefully the various accommodations that have had to be made to allow gayness to emerge as a subject-matter in the cinema. It is in some ways a rather depressing story, and by the end of the book the author seems close to saying that there is no hope for decent gay representation within the existing structures of commercial film-making and television. In this context, independently made films like *Nighthawks* and *Word is Out* seem like the only really positive possibilities open.

The book has its limitations. There is far more about gay men than about lesbians—and not

because there are more films featuring the former, but perhaps because lesbianism has been predominantly, and dreadfully, represented in heterosexual male pornography. The focus is predominantly Hollywood, and the remarks about European films are characteristic of the educated New Yorker's blinkered belief that we do things better over here. There are minor inaccuracies, and the filmography is oddly selective.

But this has to be set against the book's great readability, its charm and its wit, and a superb set of illustrations. Most important of all, this is a book that understands questions of gayness within the context of how gender and sexuality are constructed generally in society. Gayness becomes a particularly valuable way of seeing what often seems 'natural', that is, the manner in which femininity and masculinity and normative (i.e. heterosexual) sexuality are represented. Vito Russo's observations on the history of gay representation are always also about the history of how everyone, gay or straight, female or male, is constructed according to destructive gender and sexual patterns. Thus it is a book that it is at least as important for straight people to read as gays—and not just because straight people should care about how gay people are represented, but because it is so illuminating about straightness itself.

Richard Dyer

HUMPHREY JENNINGS: FILM-MAKER, PAINTER, POET. Edited by Mary Lou Jennings. B.F.I./£3.75.

This booklet about a man who was among other things one of the most distinctive of British film-makers is consciously a miscellany. It contains a selection of extracts from Jennings's notebooks and letters; previously published essays by Kathleen Raine, Charles Madge and Lindsay Anderson; and two new essays by Dai Vaughan and David Mellor. All of the material is of considerable interest, but I'm not sure that overall the booklet is sufficiently aware of what it is trying to do to avoid the obvious danger of a miscellany—incoherence.

The selections from Jennings's notebooks and letters are not substantial enough to satisfy somebody who is familiar with Jennings's work and probably too elliptical for somebody who isn't familiar with it. The essays by Raine, Madge and Anderson have by now been around long enough to need some kind of critical placing. The new essays are helpfully informative but don't have quite enough weight to give the book a definite perspective.

If you're familiar with the work of Humphrey Jennings you feel that it ought to be better known and Jennings ought to be a more central figure in British culture than he is. As David Mellor's essay reveals, Jennings's career intersected with some of the crucial events in British cultural history in the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

Jennings studied English at Cambridge at a time when the revolution in literary criticism initiated by I.A. Richards was in its early challenging phase. He began to paint in the context where modernism was still a radical force, and that modernism was further energised by his contact with the developing surrealist movement—Jennings was one of the founders of the British surrealist group. His film-making was learnt in a situation where John Grierson and his associates were defining the new genre of the documentary film. He played an important role in developing that unique blend of surrealism and sociology—Mass Observation.

The essays in the booklet by the people who knew Jennings well, Charles Madge and Kathleen Raine, testify to Jennings's intelligence, his artistic talents, his wide ranging cultural interests. All the conditions seem to have existed for the emergence of a major body of work. This booklet assumes that Jennings produced such work and that he doesn't have the artistic status he deserves because

of ignorance caused by lack of familiarity with his work.

Increasingly I've become dissatisfied with this explanation. However much more I learn about Jennings's work, it always refuses to quite take off. Something remote, some lack of dynamism prevents it from becoming the substantial body of work the circumstances out of which it was created suggest it ought to be.

Two lines of explanation might account for this: (1) Jennings's work is saturated with a sense of the English cultural past. As an artist he worked in a context where there was a strong impulse to record the character of contemporary 'reality', which in the 1930s was taken to be the world of industry, technology, mass production and urban life. Jennings struggled to bring his sense of the English cultural past into a meaningful relationship with this reality. He was only able to do so sporadically and there is always a tendency for his work to retreat into antiquarianism. Whether this difficulty was a personal one, a matter of Jennings's individual temperament, or a general one to do with the situation of British intellectuals at that time, I'm not sure. (2) Jennings's work was structured by a concept of England that was pervasive at the time, the 'organic' society. England was basically seen as an agricultural society where human labour and nature were in a traditional, harmonious relationship and where there were no antagonistic social divisions. Jennings was clearly aware of the impact of the industrial revolution, but he seems to have been unable to decisively make up his mind about the nature of this impact. The strongest impulse seems to have been to regard it as a disaster because of the way it destroyed the previously existing harmony and beauty. A contrary impulse was to reconcile it to the 'organic' myth by presenting working-class life, in particular, as the continuation of a national popular culture.

These issues obviously need more careful articulation and exploration—Jennings's politics would, for example, need to be fully discussed. If the present renewed interest in Jennings's work provokes such an investigation it will have acted as a helpful provocation to understanding part of our cultural history that still influences us today.

Alan Lovell

BOGART by Terrence Pettigrew.
Proteus/£4.95.

Whilst not being as definitive as the publishers claim, this book is a useful and lavishly illustrated survey of the actor's life and career. There are full accounts of the plots and critical reactions to the films, and Pettigrew enthusiastically discusses the films in thematic clusters rather than chronologically. This makes for rewarding sustained reading, although the absence of an index will frustrate someone simply looking for the commentary on a specific film.

Pettigrew's opinions rarely deviate much from the general critical consensus on Bogart and his films, an orthodoxy which produces, for my taste, some distortion of the '30s work, a rather elevated reading of the '40s films, and an undervaluation of the films and performances of Bogey's final years. Eccentricity is avoided and so are the benefits of hindsight, which is a pity now one can spot how Bogart's remarkable delineation of Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny* seems uncannily prophetic of Richard Nixon's behaviour in his last days at the White House. The meanings and implications behind Bogart's screen persona have been better expounded by Kenneth Tynan, Richard Schickel and Alexander Walker, and there is none of the close analysis of performance that distinguishes Richard Dyer's *Stars*, or Charles Affron's superb *Star Acting*. It is an intellectually modest book but, within those terms, solid and entertaining, and quite authoritative as a reference guide.

Neil Sinyard

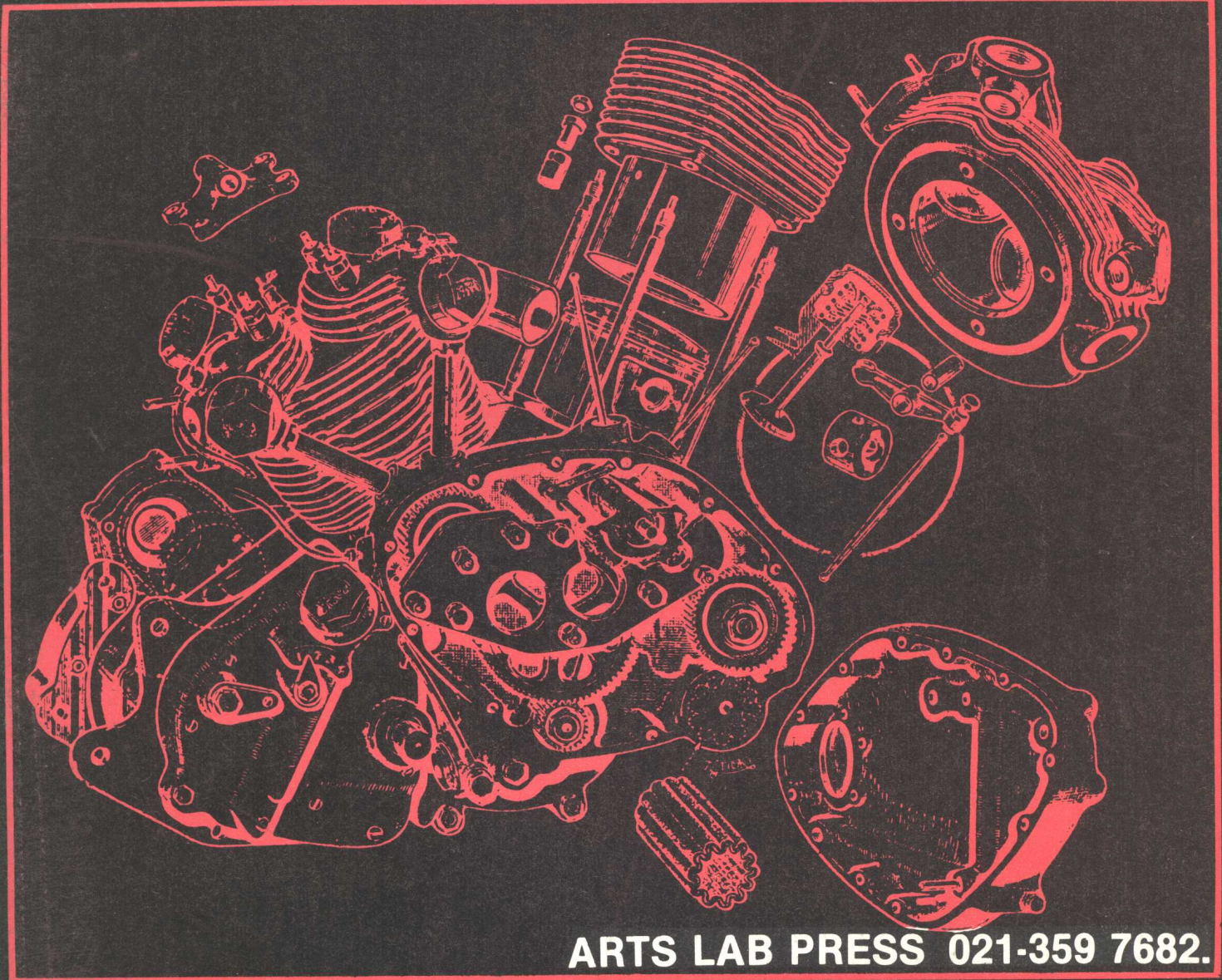
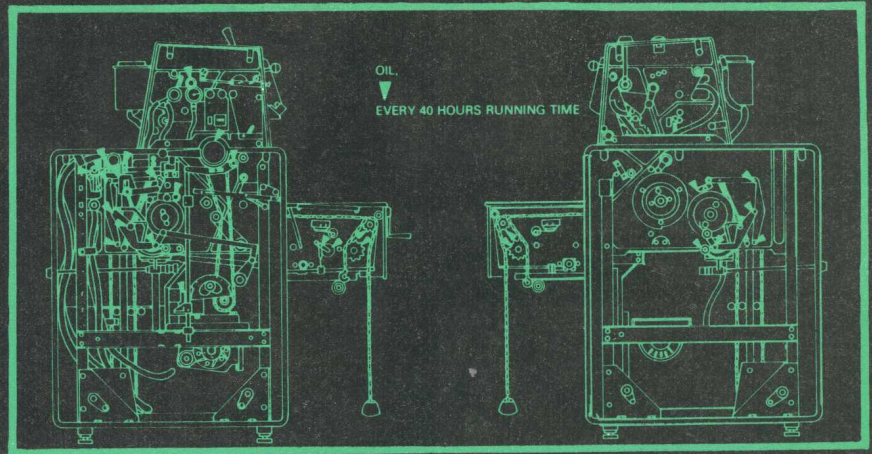
Maintenance

The continued efficiency and long working life of the machine, and its ability to produce print of the highest quality depends on the care exercised during operation, attention to necessary minor adjustments, and keeping the machine free from rust and paper dust, which if allowed to collect, may clog working parts of the machine.

Cultivate the habit of taking a last general look over the machine each night and remove any spots of moisture which may have splashed onto the parts of the machine during cleaning.

Gear Box

The gear box fitted to this model is filled with Rotaprint Gear Oil. After approximately 2,000/3,000 hours running time, the gear box



ARTS LAB PRESS 021-359 7682.

should be drained and replenished with five fluid ounces of Rotaprint Gear Oil. Over filling will result in leakage. The driving shaft on which the gear box is mounted, however, should receive one or two drops of machine oil each time the speed regulator thrust plate is oiled. The shaft is accessible when the speed regulator is turned to the highest speed position.

Multi-colour Printing

It's easy to tell when the bushes and/or rods are worn as the machine will handle pretty badly and you can soon feel play at the wheel rim, although stripping completely is best. When reassembling each plunger unit aim for absolute cleanliness and as much grease as you can get in there. Rotaprint recommended applying a grease gun to the nipple of the spindle lug clamp every 500

miles. Renew the nipple when you rebuild and ensure a clear path is made for the grease to reach the rod through the slider. Obviously you don't want the back end of your machine to look like

Jogger Side Lay (R90)

Plunger springing was standard on the ES2 and Inters from 1947, and initially fitted to the Model 7 parallel twin. But in 1953 Rotaprint introduced a pivot-fork modification to the long suffering rigid frame which had been previously chopped around to accept plunger units. So, as both the side-valve and trials models were in rigid chassis along with the ohv Model 18, you can see what the demand for spares probably amounts to.

Suction Bar Tilt

In this case nothing would shift the rods —

a welding torch just set fire to the papier mache shrouds — so they had to be cut out allowing the slider and spindle lug to be freed. The normal dismantling procedure starts with removing the silencer.

INK VIBRATOR INTERRUPTOR

Lurid stories proliferate about the handling of early Rotaprint twins. The originals may have waved when cornered hard, but the hinge-in-the-middle sensation had largely disappeared by the early sixties. The test machine handled reliably underbrisk but reasonable cornering demands, and its compact size makes manoeuvrability exceptional in bank-to-bank situations. Ground clearance is generous, aided by a short prop stand so cunningly tucked away it can only be located by a familiar foot.